THE REMINISCENCES OF FREDERICK AYER

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To

Dr. George H. Washburn

from the children of his friend,

Frederick Ayer

THE REMINISCENCES OF FREDERICK AYER

Your devoted father
Frederick Ayer

THE REMINISCENCES OF

FREDERICK AYER

BOSTON

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1923

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D. B. Updike, The Merrymount Press, Boston

NOTE

THESE reminiscences were dictated by Frederick Ayer to his daughter, Beatrice Ayer Patton, at various times after he was eighty-five years old. Mr. Ayer was always reluctant to talk about himself, and his descendants owe her a debt of gratitude for persuading him to give them this narrative. It is printed here exactly as it was taken down, except that the text has been rearranged to make the story consecutive and that a few anecdotes dictated to others have been included. Here and there dates have been added and initials expanded into names, but all other interpolated matter has been duly indicated.

An attempt has been made to clarify the text by certain footnotes and to confine them closely to that purpose. A list of authorities is given in the Appendix. Special acknowledgment is due for help received from Mr. Walter F. Brooks' *History of the Fanning Family*, and for his kind permission to reproduce the portrait of Captain Frederick Fanning.

D. G.

F. A., JR.

Boston, December 8, 1922.

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REMINISCENCES

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I

THE CONNECTICUT BACKGROUND

MY Grandmother Ayer's name was Hope Fanning. She was born, raised, and married on what was known as the Fanning farm, situated near the Ayer Mills [now called Shewville], in the northern part of the town of Groton, Connecticut, which was included in that portion of the town set off and named Ledyard.* My father, Frederick Ayer, was born and lived in Ledyard with his father and mother, about two miles from this place, and was the son of Elisha and Hope Fanning Ayer.†

The first incident of interest in my Grandfather Ayer's

*Hope Fanning was born August 14, 1757. Ten years previously her father, Thomas Fanning, had bought the farm and built the farmhouse (still standing), where both she and her grandson, Frederick Ayer, were afterwards born. He also built a sawmill on the opposite side of the road. In 1793 the Fanning farm was purchased by Hope's husband, Elisha Ayer, and in 1814 he bought the sawmill, which had gone out of the family. Shortly afterwards two of his sons, Elisha, Jr., and Frederick (father of Frederick Ayer), settled on the farm and ran the mill. At Elisha Ayer's death, in 1853, the farm passed to the children of his son, Frederick, *viz.*, James Cook Ayer, Frederick Ayer, and Lovisa Ayer Moffitt. The two brothers gave their shares to their sister, and she afterwards sold the place and moved to Iowa.

The initial mention by Frederick Ayer of the Fanning family is significant. Several members of it were persons of some distinction; and not only was he proud of them, but he based his social standards upon theirs. Service in the Legislature, a friendship with Lafayette, a portrait by Copley, command of the maintop of the *Bon Homme Richard* in her fight with the *Serapis*, voyages to the South Seas, and a Loyalist General who "died at his house in Portman Square,"—such incidents as these had their part in giving the boy a poise and dignity that were always characteristic of him.

†Frederick Ayer, Sr., was born August 14, 1792. His father, Elisha Ayer (grandfather of Frederick Ayer), was born August 16, 1757, and was fifth in descent from John Ayer, of Wiltshire, England, who came to Salisbury, Mass., about 1635, and afterwards settled in Haverhill. John Ayer's grandson, also named John, moved to Stonington, Conn., about 1695.

Elisha Ayer owned about three hundred acres of land. Part of his farm is still known as Ayer Hill, and is so designated on the U. S. Topographical Survey map.

history is that of his being taken prisoner by a British man-o'-war during the Revolution, and taken to Quebec with two shipmates; he had been privateering along the coast in a vessel of which he was half-owner. While lying there one night the three dropped quietly overboard and swam for the American shore, a distance of three miles. Two miles from shore one of the party gave out. The other two took him between them and all three reached the bank. They heard the British oarsmen in pursuit, and were only a short distance ahead of them when landing. They concealed themselves in the swamp so successfully that they were not found by their pursuers, whom they heard all the next day canvassing the woods. ["On their way home through Canada they were fortunate not to meet with anyone who betrayed them. Once they stole a boat and made a part of their journey in that, then sold the boat and continued their journey on land homeward, finally reaching Boston and then his home in Connecticut, where his friends were surprised to see him, as they thought him dead. He was not in the regular army and never in any battle, whether enrolled in the militia I do not know. [He was a private in the 1st company of Col. Parsons' Connecticut Regiment in 1775.] When the British attacked the fort at Groton* and burned New London, he, with others that were able to bear arms, hastened to defend the fort, but did not reach the place in time, the enemy having completed the work of destruction and retreated."†]

After Grandfather Ayer's marriage with Hope Fanning, my grandmother [June 27, 1782], he built the house

*The massacre at Fort Griswold took place on September 6, 1781, and was a part of the operations carried out by a British fleet of thirty-two sail under the command of Benedict Arnold, a native of Norwich.

†Letter from his grandson, Elisha Ayer, 3rd, to Louise Raynor Ayer, August 15, 1897.

The Ayer Homestead.

on his farm in Groton, now Ledyard [about 1793], where he spent the remainder of his days. He was a most energetic man and an industrious and thrifty farmer. Neither he nor members of his family had holidays, or many amusements. It was all work.

My uncle, Elisha Ayer [born December 8, 1786], was at one time engaged to a girl, who broke the engagement later. He turned wild and went to sea. When he returned after an absence of several years, he brought with him a shipload of Spanish merino sheep, a stallion, and lot of mares. He repeated this once or twice, and this was the first introduction of fine merino sheep into the neighborhood.* They were all put on his father's three farms, and from this source the country for many miles around was supplied with this breed of sheep. The laws of Spain forbade any exportation of merino sheep, and it was only through the connivance of men on shore that he succeeded in securing the sheep and horses and running them onto his vessel. Through these adventures he became quite wealthy, and made some display of it at home. On one occasion, at a ball, while dancing with Miss Cook, afterwards my mother, in a state of some excitement and for the amusement of the company, he took off his watch and chain and threw them into the open fire which heated the ballroom. He was afterwards married and lived on his farm at

* Elisha Ayer's son, Elisha, 3rd, wrote to Louise Raynor Ayer, August 15, 1897: "At the breaking out of the war [1812] my father was in Spain, had been importing merino sheep to this country. He took passage to Halifax in an English ship, and arriving at that port was ordered to go back to Spain, and threatened with being held as a prisoner of war for his temerity in coming there when war was raging between the two nations. He assented to this demand, but took passage for some port nearer home. I have forgotten the name, but he never got there, for the ship was captured by an American privateer, a prize crew put on board and he, being an American, was invited on board the privateer and had fine passage into Boston. This privateer had been out from Boston twenty-three days and taken twenty-seven prizes."

Northampton, Massachusetts, where he raised a family of children. After the death of his wife (whom it is said he had greatly misused in her lifetime) he would not sleep in his house, but had his bed removed to the loft of his corn crib, where he slept for many years. His children were Elisha Ayer, 3rd, who afterwards went to Norwich and lived there for the rest of his life. He was a machinist. The others were Sarah (unmarried), who later used to travel with Mrs. J. C. Ayer and Hope.

The only other brother of my father, George Ayer [born February 12, 1796], spent his life on his father's homestead, which he inherited, and one of his daughters, Lydia, still lives there, married to Mr. Peckham.* The other one is the wife of Mr. Griswold of Groton, Connecticut. Uncle George was a good, rather slow spoken man, who could have had any girl in the neighborhood; but he went to Milltown for his wife and she never amounted to anything. After her death, he married again — another one of the same kind. He was a colonel in the militia and Superintendent of the Indian Reservation for many years.

My father's sisters were Hope and Mary Ann, both unmarried; Clarina, married to William Halsey, of Poquetanock; Fanny, married to Shipley Halsey of Poquetanock; and Lovisa, married to my maternal uncle, James Cook. The Ayers were considered a very handsome family, and were famous for their beauty all through the state.

My mother† was the daughter of James and Persis Cook, who lived near Cook's Mills in the town of

*The farm passed to her daughter, Grace Peckham, in 1890, and was sold by her about 1901. The farmhouse burned down in 1911.

† Persis Cook, born May 8, 1796. She was sixth in descent from Gregory Cooke, who was of Cambridge, Mass., in 1665. Her great-great-grandfather, John Cooke, moved from Newton, Mass., to Preston about 1710.

Col. George Ayer
Uncle of Frederick Ayer

Preston, about two miles from Grandfather Ayer's and also from the Fanning farm. Her mother was Persis (Herrick) Cook.* James Cook, my maternal grandfather, lived on his farm at Preston, on which were a woolen mill and a sawmill, driven by water power. Woolen manufacturing was his specialty.† His boys, Chester, James, Calvin, Nathan, Dwight, Isaac, and Cyrus, all had their turn in the mill and on the farm. The girls, Christy, Josephine, and Persis, had their turn in the mill and at housework. Every farmhouse in that part of the country had its loom and spinning wheel (wool and flax) and the women of the families worked them. Christy Cook married Mr. Asa Gore and moved to Norwich, where they lived and died. Josephine married a Mr. Enoch Ferre, and lived and died in Middletown, Connecticut. Persis married my father.

As the Cook nest got too full, the boys lit out. Chester, the eldest, went to Rochester, New York, where he ran a woolen mill. James and Calvin went to Northampton, Massachusetts [in 1820], where they too had a woolen mill,‡ which burned just as Lowell was being improved. They moved to Lowell and [in June, 1830] associated themselves with the Middlesex Woolen Mills, then to

*Born August 28, 1774, at Worthington, Mass. She was sixth in descent from Henry Herrick, of Salem, born in 1604. It has been claimed that he was the son of Sir William Herrick, of Beau Manor, Leicester, and therefore a first cousin of Robert Herrick, the poet. Her mother, Olivet (Worthington) Herrick, once crossed the Westfield River on horseback, with a child in her arms, on one of the string-pieces of a bridge, the planks having been carried off by a freshet.

†Both his father and grandfather were described as "farmers" and "*clothiers*" (*i.e.*, woolen manufacturers).

‡At an early day their father had acquired a six hundred acre tract of land in the Western Reserve of Ohio. Prior to 1816 his son James had made a trip there, on horseback, to examine and report on it. The father's plan had been to divide this tract among his sons, but owing to James's unfavorable report it was exchanged for the woolen mill at Northampton.

be built. They furnished the plans and took the management of the building, stocking, and running of these, the largest woolen mills then in this country, and were eminently successful for many years. Under some change in the management of these mills, James Cook went to Burlington, Vermont, and took the management of the Winooski Mills in 1846.* When tired of manufacturing he retired and went back to Lowell to end his days.† He was married to my aunt, Lovisa Ayer. Calvin Cook married Eunice Crary and went to Waterloo, New York, where he had charge of the large woolen mills there as long as he lived. Nathan Cook married Lucy Avery and went into the woolen business in Greenville, Connecticut, with James Ripley, and subsequently retired to his farm in Preston, where he lived the balance of his life. Isaac married Abby Kimball, remained at the old homestead, and ran the mill as long as he lived. Dwight married Miss Abby Amelia Avery, moved to Norwich, and was interested in several woolen mills. Cyrus died, unmarried, while a young man.

The neighbors used to drive their sheep to the pond near Grandfather Cook's to wash them for shearing.

*A letter from Frederick Ayer to his aunt, Hope Ayer, dated Syracuse, September 4, 1847, refers to a visit to the Cooks in Burlington: "A few days after I wrote you before I went to Burlington & stayed some three days — had a eccelent visit, found the folks all enjoying health, life, & spirits, they have a great deal to say about your affairs in Connecticut. . . . We rode about some & saw some of the Lyons of Burlington, but spent most of the time at home. . . . I sent the Draft [$25.50] on F & N Donnelly & Co our Bankers in N. Y. & it ought to be worth a premium in Norwich of from ¼ to ½ pr ct but if it is not as current in Norwich as a Bank Draft return it & I will send you a Draft on the American Exchange Bank in New [York.]"

†As a matter of fact he was quite active for a considerable period after his return to Lowell. For a year he was agent of the Middlesex Corporation and then became president of the Lowell Mutual Fire Insurance Company. In 1858 he was elected mayor of the city.

Homestead of Capt. James Cook
Grandfather of Frederick Ayer

The process was to lead a sheep into the water until his feet were off bottom, wash him and squeeze the wool until he was clean, then let him run out. Mr. Franklin Parks had in his flock an old, curly-horned buck-sheep. Mother, a young girl about twelve, was standing by to watch the process of washing, and Mr. Parks said to her: "Passy, if you can wash that buck, you may have him." Passy unhesitatingly stepped into the pen, took the buck by the horns, marched him into the water nearly up to her armpits, gave him a thorough washing, and led him out and *home*, much to Mr. Parks' disgust.

My Grandfather Cook was a very strong Episcopalian and was much devoted to an Episcopal clergyman preaching in Poquetanock at the time Father and Mother were married [June 9, 1817]. My father did not believe in said clergyman, but submitted to the marriage, performed by him at Grandfather Cook's, and then took his bride to another minister, in whom he had confidence, and was married a second time, saying that he was not going to bring up a houseful of bastards, because he was not regularly married. Soon after this marriage they settled on the old Fanning farm, then owned by Grandfather Ayer.

In connection with running this farm, my father also ran the Ayer Mills, consisting of a shingle mill, sawmill, grist mill, carding mill, wagon factory, and blacksmith shop, and was a very hard worker. Overwork is supposed to have been the cause of his early death. In the War of 1812 he was commissioned in a company raised in his neighborhood, and served but a short time before the war was ended.* My uncle, James Cook, was corporal in the same company.

There was one cold season—I think 1814—when

*"Commissioned" sergeant in the 8th Regiment, Connecticut Infantry, Lt.-Col. William Belcher commanding, November 16, 1814.

the crops in our neighborhood were very light and the immediate surrounding country suffered for food. My father chartered a vessel, went to New York from New London, loaded it with corn, and distributed it in the neighborhood, for which I suppose he was paid.

My first recollection of my father was one sunny, and I believe Sunday, morning; he was sitting on the steps of his house looking across the road at a flock of sheep on the opposite knoll. He took me on his back with a pail of salt in his hand and went over to salt the sheep. As soon as he entered the enclosure, the sheep huddled around and jumped on him, hitting me with their feet and noses, much to my discomfort. He threw the salt in handfuls on the rocks and grass, and the sheep left us. My next recollection of him was walking home with him from the group of mills of which he had charge. He sat down to rest several times, although the distance was short, complaining that he was tired. And my last and only other recollection of him was when old Dr. Downer, of Preston City, came to visit him and bled him. I remember his lying on the bed with his arm stretched out over the side, seeing the doctor bandage and then tap the vein, and the splashing of the blood on the yellow bowl. This must have been very near the end of his last sickness. He died of overwork. These things must have happened in the summer or fall before I was three years old.* The events I have set down were calculated to make an impression on a youthful mind, which is the only way I can account for my very distinct memory of them.

After my father's death the old house was very lonesome, and Mother, alone with her four little children

* Frederick Ayer was born December 8, 1822. His father died December 21, 1825.

Capt. Pundersons Grist Mill

and a sixteen year old pauper servant girl, Lyddy Roth, was full of fears. (I remember two or three of us slept at that time in a trundle bed that pushed under Mother's in the daytime.) Mother heard strange noises at night and somehow made up her mind that my uncle, George Ayer, came around to frighten her, wanting, for some reason, to drive her out of the house. Uncle George was not the kind of man to do such a thing as this, but Mother "knew" he did. She carried the feeling so far that she refused to be buried in the same cemetery as Uncle George. That is why she lies in the Avery, instead of the Ayer, Burying Ground.

When we left our birthplace, Mother secured a tenement for herself and four children in a part of the house owned and occupied by Captain Punderson, in Preston. This proved to be a very troublesome place for Mother, as Captain Punderson was the owner of a grist mill and pond, all near our residence. My brother James [born May 5, 1819] and I were bewitched to be around the pond, and persisted in throwing large stones into Captain Punderson's flume, which fed his overshot wheel. Sometimes the stones would clog the wheel and on some occasions knocked out some of the buckets, all of which made the association disagreeable.*

My brother's pranks and mine were too numerous to mention. On one occasion a neighbor by the name of Button was harvesting and, as was the custom of that time, had rum and water, sweetened with molasses, for himself and the hands. I was interested in the process of harvesting, followed the reapers, and getting thirsty drank freely from the pail. I soon grew tired, and was told that I finally gave up following the reapers, lying

*The mill-stone from Capt. Punderson's mill is now in the sun room of Louise Ayer Gordon's house, at Lincoln.

down on a bundle of grain, and one of the men carried me home, fast asleep. My brother and I were considered quite uncontrollable by my mother, and too much for her management.

My father and mother had five children: Frederick, who died at the age of eight months, James, Fanny, myself, and Lovisa. When we left Captain Punderson's house, Mother took James and Lovisa with her to Grandfather Cook's. She kept house in the basement of this house of which the sides and front were above ground. I was sent to Grandfather Ayer's because Mother could not manage me, and Fanny stayed there with me two or three months at first. Then she, too, went to live with Mother. Mother said she used to worry dreadfully about my life at Grandfather Ayer's. That was one reason she married again—to give me a home. My sister Fanny died from typhus fever, when she was sixteen [November 23, 1835]. She was a very handsome and very attractive girl. She was my playmate.

"Grun'f'ther's Iyers"

II

"GRAN'F'THER AYER'S"

At the time I lived at Grandfather Ayer's, the family consisted of Grandfather and Grandmother Ayer, Aunts Hope and Mary Ann, and Uncle George. The inside plan of the house was thus: A large kitchen, a parlor, the "east room" (a sort of large reception room), Grandfather and Grandmother's bedroom, and Uncle George's bedroom, on the first floor; upstairs, a large chamber occupied by my two aunts, a guest chamber, and a long room over the kitchen. This room contained several beds and was occupied by the help and myself. The loom and wool wheel always stood in one corner. The flax wheel, in the attic, was run by the old slave woman, Phileney.

Aunt Hope was a lovely, motherly woman, who would have done a good deal for me if she could. I remember one winter when I was very sick with a cold, the family, afraid I was going to die, sent for the doctor. When he came, he found me in Aunt Hope's bed, and said: "In bed with Hopey, eh? I guess you'll git well!"

Grandfather bought for Aunts Hope and Mary Ann the Swan farm, adjoining his on the west. They lived there for a short time. This was after I left them. It did not suit Aunt Mary Ann. Aunt Mary Ann never took any interest in me or in anything connected with the old home. She thought herself very handsome and, even at the time I lived at Grandfather Ayer's, used to spend the time visiting Aunt Lovisa Cook, in Lowell. This journey was made by stage and took the greater part of three days: Norwich to Providence, Providence to Boston, and Boston to Lowell. Finally she transferred

her headquarters entirely to Lowell, where she died about 1889.

Living near Grandfather Ayer's were his two sisters, old maids, Olive and Eunice; and nicer, primmer little old ladies I never saw. They were always glad to see me whenever I went to their house. Farther down, on the same (east) side of us, by the old Ayer Burying Ground, lived Joseph Ayer, Grandfather's brother. He was much like Grandfather Ayer, with some of the harshness left out. He had a fine family of children.

Grandmother Ayer was a very amiable, genial, lovely old lady. Everybody loved her. Grandfather Cook was very fond of her and used to visit her frequently. She was very deaf and usually sat in the chimney corner knitting. When Grandfather Cook called, she would say to him: "Now, Jeems, draw your chair *right* up, and tell me *all* you know!"* One of her neighbors, by the name of Main, circulated some gossip about her, of which she heard. Shortly after this, one of the boys came in and reported to her that Mr. Main was standing out in the horse shed, very wet and very cold. She sent word for him to come in, which he did, and stood up in front of the fire without any remarks passing between them. After a few minutes of silence, Grandmother looked up at him and said: "Mr. Main, aren't you *easy* in my company?" She was very contented at home and seldom went out to the neighbors. She took snuff, whereas Grandmother Cook smoked a pipe. Grandfather smoked cigars very sparingly. One would last him several days. Most of the house help were Indian girls. Last time I was there with my son James in 1911, a woman named Rachel came up to see me. She had worked for Grandfather Ayer when I lived there.

* Frederick Ayer said she was "a very placid, calm woman," about five feet ten, and weighing well over two hundred pounds.

Capt. Frederick Fanning
Great-uncle of Frederick Ayer

"GRAN'F'THER AYER'S"

Grandfather Ayer was a very industrious man, and never could endure to see anyone about him idle. Though only four years old, with him I never was too young to work. There would be stones to pick up in the garden, sticks to pick up around the place, and when this was done to perfection he would always find something else that a boy of my size could do. I can't remember that I was ever too small to drive the cows to pasture and bring them home, to carry luncheon and water to the men in the field, to bring in wood, build fires, turn the spit, and help at all sorts of work about the house and kitchen. I could always feed the cattle, and it was early found that I could milk, which called for early rising and late work. My grandfather had large flocks of merino sheep, which are very delicate, and had to be housed during storms and in winter, and to be fed on turnips or carrots. My evening's work during the winter was to help the men slice up several bushels of these roots each evening. The Groton Indians used to pass our place in going to and from Preston City, where they got their rum and tobacco, and they generally stopped on their way to quench their thirst with cider, which was always free and abundant, and which it was my duty to draw for them. After school in winter I had to go to a barn a mile and a half from the house, through a lonely wood, to feed a band of sheep that were kept there. This barn was on the Indians' route to their reservation and I was always expecting to put a pitchfork into one of them who had got too tired to go further and taken lodgings for the night in the hay.

One of the squaws used to spin flax in our attic and had crazy spells, would mutter to herself and was really quite wild, but not considered dangerous. Her peculiarities, however, made a deep impression on my young

mind, and did not add to my happiness. She spun a good deal of the thread used by the family, and all the linen. The tow she spun was made into shirts for me. As they were never washed until I had given them a good wearing, the memory of their scratching is very distinct.

The flax was not cut but pulled by the roots and put into water, where it lay for several weeks until the shell of the stalk was partially decayed; then taken out, spread and dried. The shells were whipped out, handful by handful, over a board shaped for that purpose. Then the flax was broken in a breaker made of wooden knives passing up and down between each other and hetchelled by whipping it into a bunch of sharp wires and drawing it through. This separated the tow and broken shell from the flax. The tow came out in a loose mass and was the shorter and coarser fibre and the flax the longer; this tow, with all the shell remnants in it, was spun and made into my shirts.

Grandfather Ayer did not believe in fun. There was always so much to do that the time was filled up without it. At school, however, in winter, I used to slide on the ice. A good many of the other boys had sleds and skates, but I never could afford a pair of skates. I had a little box in which I had some pennies — I don't know how I ever got them — and I used to count them over every little while. I would not have had any use for it, but what I wanted was money — some of my own. I remember once hearing that a bone-button factory in Greenville would buy old bones. I hunted around the place until I had collected about a half bushel of bones of various kinds. Then one day when Uncle George was going to Norwich on business, I told him about my collection and asked him to take it to the button-factory and sell it for me. I was anticipating getting quite a

fortune from it. When Uncle George came back, the factory had refused to take the bones. They were season-cracked and of no use.

At one time there was a muster of the militia to take place five miles from us, and I was finishing up the binding and shucking of a field of buckwheat. The day before, I asked Grandmother to intercede for me for a permit to go. She said she was afraid Grandfather would never consent, unless I could get the buckwheat all up. That night, by moonlight, I worked until one o'clock, which won me permission to walk five miles to the muster the next day. I must have been about eleven years old.

About a year later there was a general muster at New London, where I persuaded my grandfather to take me. On the edge of the village we stopped at the house of a Mrs. Taylor, an acquaintance of my grandfather's, located directly in front of the parade. Mrs. Taylor was out in the front yard watching the parade with a few friends, when my grandfather approached. She greeted him with enthusiasm and, exclaiming, cried: "Squire Ayer, if there had been as many men here at the battle of Fort Groton as there are to-day, I should n't have had to take off my petticoats for gun-wadding!"

In the Whitney family, who were neighbors, there were two very pretty young ladies. They came to Grandfather Ayer's with their horse and wagon and asked that I might drive them to Poquetanock, which I was permitted to do. Their old horse was very slow and would hardly go at all without whipping. The whip was worn up so short that I could only reach the horse by leaning over the dashboard, and as a corner of my shirt stuck out at least in one place through the seat of my trousers, the position required to encourage the horse on his journey caused me great embarrassment.

The red schoolhouse on the [Preston] Plains was also the meeting-house, and we frequently had services there. Mr. Roswell Parks always led the singing; he was about eighty years old and had only one tooth, which was very prominent. He was a great snuff taker: when he rose to sing, he would always take out his snuff-box, rap it, take a lusty pinch, and pitch the tune thus: "Baaaa-a-a!"—much to the amusement of the younger members of the congregation.

Lorenzo Dow was at this time a travelling preacher of much notoriety, and on one occasion it was announced that he would preach at our schoolhouse. The house being small, the day pleasant, and the congregation expected large, our deacons built a platform between the road and the schoolhouse for him to stand on. A large congregation assembled, Mr. Dow approached in an old four-wheeled top-buggy, very rusty, drawn by a very bony, poor old horse, stopped in front of the platform, threw down the reins, stood up, took off his hat and set it on top of the buggy, declined to alight, much to the deacons' discomfiture, and proceeded at once to business. After a little prayer, Uncle Roswell pitched his tune and sang with his choir, when Mr. Dow immediately proceeded with his sermon. Sermon finished, he picked up his reins, put on his hat, gave the old horse a jerk, and left without even saying good-bye to the deacons.

The most eccentric character of our neighborhood was Uncle Elkanah Fanning [who died December 3, 1818]. He occasionally indulged in the use of "West India goods" (rum and molasses), and used to say that when he died he wanted to be buried in a chestnut coffin so that he might go snapping and cracking through Hell. Once, while he was hoeing in his garden, a man rode up on horseback, stopped, and said: "I would like

The Old Red School House
Preston Plains

to inquire the way to Mystic." Elkanah deliberately hauled up his hoe, rested on the handle, looked at the man and said, "I have no objection!" Another man inquired of him the way to "Little Rest." He pointed to the house of Jonas Winter in the distance and said: "There 's the least rest in that house of any place in *this* country." Winter was famous for working his family, help, and teams to the last extremity.

Elkanah's brother, Charles Fanning, Esq., lived in Jewett City and was a most exemplary man.* He represented his district in the General Court when it was an honor to do so. I remember him as one of the few people I ever saw who habitually wore the old-fashioned buckled shoes, long stockings, buff waistcoat and blue coat with silver buttons and white, pigtailed wig.

When I was almost twelve years old, my mother married Hezekiah R. Parke, a tailor [August 3, 1834], and moved to Jewett City. The occasion of her marriage was an epoch in my life, as I wore my first suit of clothes to the wedding. (He made the suit.) Up to that time, Grandfather Ayer's worn out trousers cut off at the calf, had been thought good enough. The next year Mother took me from Grandfather Ayer's to live with her, where I would have better schooling and advantages.

*Charles Fanning, born December 16, 1749, moved to Jewett City early in life and married Anne Brewster. He enlisted in the Continental Army May 8, 1775, and served seven years and eight months, commencing with the rank of sergeant and rising to that of captain. He was at Long Island, Germantown, Valley Forge, Monmouth, Stony Point, and Yorktown. After the war he became one of the pioneer merchants of Jewett City. He was an original member of the Society of the Cincinnati, and sat for many years in the Legislature. When Lafayette visited the United States in 1824, on his journey from New York to Boston, he called on Captain Fanning at his house and warmly greeted him as "Comrade Fanning."

Charles Fanning died March 22, 1837. His estate was inventoried at over $25,000.

A year or so later we moved to Greenville,* where I went to school, and Mr. Parke went West to hunt a new home and greater business prosperity. Parke was a great Methodist and in his travels about the country had found some most congenial fellow Methodists at Baldwinsville. I don't know that they could pray as hard as he could, but they were good enough at it. He decided to move us all there. The family were living pretty close to the quick, and to keep expenses down on the trip it was decided to charter a small sloop—perhaps 30 feet long—to take us to Albany, and our household effects and the family were embarked at Norwich. I don't remember how long we were on the way to New York, but we were two weeks going from New York to Albany. There were very few houses or villages in those days and our food supply used to run pretty low. When we caught sight of a likely house we used to run ashore, tie up at the bank and see if we could buy some bread or milk. It was in the summer, and drifting under the Palisades it was very hot, and we were compelled to replenish our stores many times. At Albany our effects were transferred to a canal boat bound for Syracuse, and on arrival there we were dumped on the towpath to await the boat for Baldwinsville, which came the next day. I watched the stores on the towpath during the night.

Baldwinsville proved to be a pleasant country village, where I found and attended a good private school for two winters, and drove teams on the Erie and Oswego canals during the summers. I was always a restless sort of person, always had had to work, and besides my services were needed by the family as a breadwinner. There was a lawyer in the town named Parker and I

*A letter to Frederick Ayer from his brother, James Cook Ayer, dated Lowell, April 23, 1838, was written in verse and addressed to Greenville.

went to him for a job. "Well," he said, "if you know anything about horses I can get you one." Ever since I could remember I had had a great fancy for horses, to ride or drive, and so I took a job as driver on the canal.* Our boats carried two pairs of horses in the front, one pair at a time, and the family and help in the stern. There were two drivers to a boat; each had a pair of horses to drive and to care for, one pair being in the boat while the other was on the towpath. The space between the stable and the family house was used for freight, and the drivers were expected to do their full share of loading and unloading, which was frequently very heavy work. The hours of driving were four on and four off. Rain or storms never interrupted the work. It was pretty rough sometimes, I can tell you.

After several years in Baldwinsville, where Persis Parke and William Ayer Parke were born,† my mother found it difficult to get work enough out of Mr. Parke to support their little family. They sold their house for $500 and joined a community in Skaneateles, headed and engineered by John Collins and known as the Collins Community. Another family of her acquaintance in Baldwinsville preceded them and gave such good accounts of the community that my mother decided to take this step, as Mr. Parke and the little family had become too much of a load for her to carry. With the $500 from their house paid into the community, a contract was entered into with Mr. Collins and his board of managers to take care of them during their lifetime,

*So great was Frederick Ayer's fondness for horses that he several times said that if it had not been for the influence and constant stimulation of his brother James—largely in the form of letters—he believed he might have become a professional jockey.

†William Ayer Parke was born in Baldwinsville, August 18, 1842; Persis Ayer Parke was born in Jewett City, February 2, 1837.

they giving their services, such as they might be, in addition. The community consisted mostly of families who appeared to be respectable, but poor; and unlike the Oneida Community, each family retained its family organization. Mr. Collins did not succeed in raising money to carry out his plan, and I believe my mother, with her brood, was one of the first to leave. It was there they became acquainted and very warm friends with Mr. Parrish Johnson and his family of wife and two sons, Parrish and Grove; and through Mr. Johnson's assistance she succeeded in getting the $500 she had paid in. From there they went onto a farm near Skaneateles, where Lovisa became acquainted with Mr. Arden Moffitt and married him [May 27, 1846]. Mr. Moffitt looked very much like Donald Gordon, but taller and heavier. He was a farmer, very lazy, very kind, and especially fond of horses. He would fool round a neighbor's sick horse all day long, neglecting his own business, and farming for him was not a success. After many ups and downs in the West, we persuaded Mr. and Mrs. Moffitt to come East and take up their residence on the old Fanning farm, which had been left by Grandfather Ayer, without the mills, to James, Lovisa and me. After a while Moffitt again became restless and went West, and we deeded the house to Lovisa. But she wanted to follow him, so she sold the farm and with the money went West. She went out to Iowa where he was keeping a livery stable, and lived there the rest of her days. [She died in Creston, Iowa, January 16, 1901.]

From Skaneateles they moved to a farm further south, where Mr. Parke became more than ever absorbed in religion and spiritualism—spiritualism predominating, until he became absolutely crazy, of which Mother sent word to me—then in Syracuse—and I went and found

Mr. Parke very wild and uncontrollable. I immediately took him in my vehicle to Syracuse, where I kept him over-night, and the next day took him to the Utica Insane Asylum, where he remained a year or more, when he was released, but never returned to live with the family. He had studied phrenology, which was then a going science, and with my assistance procured charts and the necessary paraphernalia for lecturing on that subject and examining heads.*

He travelled from place to place and pursued this occupation until he died [August 23, 1869]. I returned to the farm, sold their little effects, except such as Mother wanted for her housekeeping, and took her and the two children to Baldwinsville, where they occupied a hired tenement until after I went to Lowell and was married [December 15, 1858], when I took her home to live with me. Persis went to school in Syracuse and William, after a short experience in McCarthy's store, went to the Phillips Academy in Andover.†

* He was, incidentally, an enthusiastic genealogist, and under date of September 8, 1859, received a letter from Lord Wensleydale (Baron Parke) relative to their presumably common ancestry in England, together with a copy of the Parke coat of arms.

† "Persis was subsequently married to a provision dealer in St. Louis [Lansing J. Lansing], with whom she lived until he died [February 3, 1875], and then taught school during the balance of her life. [She died August 8, 1899.] William, after a year at the Phillips Academy, got a position in Arnold & Constable's store in New York. When the Civil War broke out, he and a friend, as lieutenant and captain, respectively, formed a troop of cavalry [the 6th New York] and went to the War, where he served three years and eleven months under Sheridan. He got sick and was obliged to resign his position in the cavalry, and after about a year recovered his health and took charge of a lumber company in Pensacola, Florida, in which I was interested. After the lumber company was sold, he took charge of some cotton plantations on one of the islands off the coast of South Carolina which my brother and I had leased. From there he went to New York City, where he started a lumber business which he has continued to this date. His wife is Maria Bayard Moore, of Hempstead, New York." FREDERICK AYER.

They were married August 5, 1874. She died September 4, 1921. He died March 8, 1923.

My mother remained in my family during the balance of her life. [She died July 23, 1880.] She was a very extraordinary woman with great ambition, great industry, always full of fun, and a most extraordinarily devoted mother. She made a *home* wherever she went. She added greatly to the enjoyment of my family through her cheerful and jolly disposition. The neighbors liked to come in and sit with her and the other members of the family and sew afternoons, when she would keep the whole party laughing with her jokes and stories. She was buried in the Avery Burying Ground in "Presson," Connecticut, where Mr. Parke had been buried before her. On account of her dislike of George Ayer, she had her first husband's, her oldest son Frederick's, and her daughter Fanny's remains removed to the family lot in the Avery Burying Ground.* The headstones of the three above named persons were left, and still remain, in the Ayer Burying Ground.

*The "Avery Burying Ground" was formerly called the Preston Plains Cemetery. On December 20, 1860, Lot No. 27 was conveyed to James Cook Ayer and Frederick Ayer—presumably to enable their mother to make the removals referred to in the text.

Persis Ayer Parke

III

A YANKEE TRADER

WHEN I felt that I could not afford any more time for school, I looked for permanent employment and secured a place in the country store of John H. Tomlinson & Co. at $72 a year. I was "the boy," and there were six or eight men salesmen. I took a keen interest in the business and was always ready to do any kind of work. The clerks were glad to let me do anything that would relieve them, like opening cases of new goods, in which way I soon became familiar with all the goods that came into the store. After a year or so I was sent to Canton to a branch store, the partner and manager of which was C. Hullbert Toll. Mr. Toll was not a merchant, and I soon had the management of the store. This was a much smaller enterprise than the one at Baldwinsville and did not satisfy my ambitions. I asked to be returned to Baldwinsville, which was done. Mr. Tomlinson was a very energetic and lively man; he kept things moving, and it was a pleasure to work with him.

James L. Voorhees of Lysander, father-in-law of Mr. Tomlinson, owned large tracts of pine and farming land. He cut and rafted the timber from his and other lands, of which he bought the stumpage, in the canal. The only market for such timber at that time was New York City. Voorhees was his own raftsman to Albany, where the logs were let into the Hudson River and re-bunched for New York. There he found ready sale for them for cash, with which he returned home and paid the bills which had accumulated during the logging season. On one occasion after selling his logs, he went to the Astor House for dinner without change of clothes. Being late, the

principal diners had left the room, and he was given the end of a table by himself. Shortly after he took his seat, dinner was brought for a party of young bucks and put on the same table, a short distance from him. The bucks amused themselves by poking fun at the old codger in his rafting garb, to which he paid no attention for a time; but finally it became too hard to stand, when Voorhees arose, stepped up onto the table, walked down to where the young men's dinner was spread, and walked through it, sweeping it off both sides of the table with his feet. When remonstrated with by the waiters and men from the office who wanted to know his name and address, he said: "I am the Tall Pine of Lysander! Give me your bill." On his return from New York with his pockets full of money, he would walk home twelve miles from the point of public transportation rather than hire a team to take him.

Voorhees' lumbermen got all their supplies at Tomlinson's store. They would come with large teams and bring their families about two or three times a year to do their trading. On one occasion a clerk by the name of Smith sold one of the men a very large cheese—about two and one-half feet in diameter. It was one of a cargo of cheeses that had been sunk in the canal and raised by Mr. Tomlinson. The buyer, a man about thirty years old and about six feet four, with extraordinarily long arms reaching below his knees, lived in the town of Granby, several miles away. The next day he marched into the store with the cheese on his shoulder, strode up to the counter where Smith was standing, slammed the cheese down onto the counter and said: "Smith, by God, when you sell me another cheese, don't sell me one that 'll git to Granby before I do!"

Mr. Voorhees was one of the wealthy men of that

section, and contracted to build a large hotel in Syracuse. Mr. Philo N. Rust, a well known winebibber of Syracuse, and a splendid hotel keeper, was engaged to run it for him. After John, son of President Van Buren, had painted Europe red with Prince Edward (afterwards Edward VII), he used to come to Syracuse to visit Philo N. Rust, proprietor of the Syracuse House, and after that proprietor of the Voorhees House where I boarded. They were very congenial and had royal old sprees together. At the age of about sixty years Mr. Rust had a shock, which confined him to the house for several months. There was in Syracuse a Presbyterian deacon by the name of Dana who was celebrated for his long-faced piety. Rust recovered sufficiently to sit out on the sidewalk in front of his hotel in the sun, when one morning Deacon Dana came along and, accosting Mr. Rust, said: Mr. Rust, you've had a very narrow call—a very close call, Mr. Rust!" Rust looked up in Dana's face and said: "Deacon Dana, what if I had *died?* I've had more fun in my sixty years than you'll have if you live to be one hundred and sixty!"

It was the custom at that time to pay all sorts of help by orders on stores, and Mr. Tomlinson started a general store for the purpose of paying the help who were building the hotel. His brother-in-law, Sam Sharp, an old merchant, was put in charge of the store. After it had been running for several months, Mr. Tomlinson asked me to go into it. I objected because Sharp and I did not agree in our methods of business, but Tomlinson said I should have my own way and that Sharp should not interfere with me, so I went. Tomlinson shortly saw how things were going and sent Sharp back to Baldwinsville, giving me entire charge of the store. I had by this time got to be something of a salesman, and when people came

with orders I would try to interest them in our goods. With such others as naturally dropped in I got up quite a little clientage, and quite a little business outside the orders. The orders were not always brought by the laborers or mechanics, but frequently got into the hands of attorneys and nice families, of whom, when they came to trade out their orders, I would generally make friends and customers. Finally, when I was somewhere between the ages of twenty and twenty-one [1842–43], Mr. Tomlinson proposed to take me into partnership, which I thought a great strike as well as a great compliment. I wanted to have something more than my individuality to represent me in the concern, so I went to Grandfather Ayer, Uncle James Cook, and my brother James, each of whom loaned me money amounting in all to about $600, all of which I paid back out of the concern. Mr. Tomlinson finally became so much interested in outside operations that he gave no attention whatever to the store and its requirements.

FREDERICK AYER TO HIS GRANDFATHER, ELISHA AYER

Syracuse Sept 26, 1845.

DEAR. GRAND. FATHER,

It is now 10, o.clock in the evening & I have just returned from Baldwins Ville where I went this morning. . . . Uncle [George Ayer] saw the account of the divadend by the Baldwins Ville consern for the two last years [1843–45] which was $18,000.00. It is one of the oldest and best established mercantile houses in the County and by connecting the two [*i.e.* the Baldwinsville and Syracuse branches] it makes a much safer investment and places our facilities far, *very far*, ahead

of any I know. You will recolect hearing me say that I did not exactly feel like taking upon myselfe the responsabilities of this consern, and it was upon this ground that I made the sudgestion that Mr. Lusk one of the partners at Baldwins ville who is an older & more experienced business man, should exchange places with me thereby lessening the responsability on my part— this was favourably looked upon and Mr. Lusk accordingly came, then the question arose whether I could be of more service here or at B. Ville & careing but little which place I stoped at I left it for the rest to decide it was finaly decided somewhat to my satisfaction that I could be of the most service here. Messrs. Smith & Toll are the partners at B. Ville and will take charge of affairs there, and Messrs. Lusk & Ayer here. Mr. Tomlinson will spend part of his time here & part at the other place looking after both ends of the route . . .

Oct. 6th. . .

We have rec[d] a good stock of fall goods and our business moves off most admirably; our sales for the last two weeks here amounts to $8530.00. At Baldwins ville about two thirds as much making $14216.00 at both places. I have rec[d] one thousand Dollars each from James Cook & J. C. Ayer with what you let me have & what I can bring to bear of my own I think will answer my purpose. . . .

At the time of the great potato famine in Ireland [1846–47] I was sleeping under the counter in the store on Salina Street. This was before the telegraph was in general use. Tomlinson had arranged a communication from New York by which he hoped to get the first reliable news in regard to the extent of the famine.

Other operators in grain, etc., had done the same thing, the object being to secure large quantities of grain, flour, and food products before the news should advance the prices. One night, about midnight, a furious rattling on the store door woke me: it was by the messenger expected by Tomlinson. He brought the definite news of the famine and told me to get Mr. Tomlinson there as soon as the Lord would let me. I hustled down to Tomlinson's house, woke him and told him the news, and he followed me very closely back to the store, buttoning his clothes as he went. In the meantime the messenger had procured a pair of fast horses in a light hitch and they drove with all speed to Oswego, where there were several large flouring mills and large stores of wheat. They arrived about daylight, and as early as practicable Tomlinson got in communication with all the mills and bought all their flour and wheat. He could do this rapidly and without exciting suspicion because he was in the habit of dealing with them in this way and more frequently appeared very early in the morning for such purchases than at any other time. After he had finished his purchases and practically secured all the flour in Oswego and contracted for all they could make for several months ahead, on his way back to the hotel he met several other men from Syracuse who had gone to Oswego on the same errand. When he saw them coming he set up a whistle in his boyish way, and said: "Boys, you're too late! I've got all there is!"

The handling and shipping of this vast amount of food product to Ireland absorbed Mr. Tomlinson's entire time and took him from the store completely, and the final result was the winding up of his interest in the store and my combination with Dennis McCarthy. The stock in our store was all turned over to me by Mr.

Tomlinson and I gave up my outside business interests to him. This left me in full possession. Dennis McCarthy had opened a dry goods store next to us, with only a partition wall between. I had the larger store, it being fifty feet deeper than McCarthy's. He needed more room; I needed a partner. We agreed to take our stocks at invoice prices, at the inventory, and put them together, either paying to the other the difference in value, and cut a wide archway between the stores, throwing them into one. We then entered into equal partnership under the name of McCarthy and Ayer [March 1, 1847].

"Our sales, this, the third year of our present firm, ending March first [1850] will amount to about $85,000.00 you will say we ought to make something on this amount of business, so we ought & hope, but ambitious still to make, instead of withdrawing from our business we invest faster than we can make. . . ."*

McCarthy had two brothers and a brother-in-law by the name of Titus in the store, all clerks. Titus had once been a merchant on his own account and he and the two brothers naturally felt that they should have the place that I had taken as partner with Dennis; and an increased jealousy as time went on showed itself to McCarthy. While they did disagreeable things to me and showed this jealousy to me, I don't remember that I ever referred to it to McCarthy. He discovered it, however, and told them that if they interfered with me in any way, or made themselves disagreeable, they would have to leave. They all left shortly after. After about two years of this partnership, Mr. Tomlinson was run over and killed by a railroad train at Little Falls. It then developed that some debts created by him in the name of J. H. Tomlinson & Co. and of which he agreed

*Frederick Ayer to his aunt, Hope Ayer, dated Syracuse, January 6, 1850.

to take care when I went in with McCarthy, had not been paid; I was sued for these debts and, fearing the results, wrote to my brother, who came on to Syracuse and purchased of me my interest in McCarthy & Ayer, and the firm name was changed to D. McCarthy & Co. My attorneys in these suits were B. Davis Noxon and Parrish Johnson (grandfather of the present [1913] Governor Johnson, of California), bookkeeper of Tomlinson & Co. and a very good attorney, who knew the situation. My attorneys were most efficient and won my suits, which relieved me from the responsibility of these debts. Mr. Noxon was an old man and very clever. One day at the Court House he saw that I was anxious. Tapping me on the shoulder he said: "Young man, don't give yourself any anxiety about these cases. Mr. Johnson and I will take care of them." And they did. The cases were decided in my favor, soon after which the interest in the firm of McCarthy & Ayer, which I had transferred to my brother, was re-transferred to me, and the business continued as above until March, 1855, when I sold my interest to McCarthy and formed a partnership with my brother James in Lowell in the medicine business, he holding two-thirds in the business and I one-third.

During the eight years that McCarthy and I were in business together, we never had any misunderstandings or a word of difference. We discussed freely the business policy of the firm and any important points that came up from time to time. I felt a very warm personal friendship for McCarthy and I have every reason to believe that he did for me. A year or so after leaving Syracuse, I made a loan of $40,000 to McCarthy for the purpose of building a wholesale store, which he ran in connection with the retail business for several years.

McCarthy was an Original Democrat. When the War broke out in 1861, he believed that the Democratic party had taken a wrong position, and turned Republican. He was afterwards elected to Congress by the Republicans of his district, where he served two terms, and later to the New York Senate, of which he was President.

He was not an admirer of Roscoe Conkling and Platt, then senators from New York to the United States Senate, and who thought they owned the state politically. In some controversy with the Administration, to show their political power in New York, these two senators resigned their seats, believing that they could be sent immediately back from Albany. To get their names before the New York Senate they would have to be recommended by a certain committee of which McCarthy, by virtue of his Presidency, was chairman. Messrs. Conkling and Platt exerted every influence in their power to get McCarthy to call that committee together to present their names for re-election, but McCarthy, who believed neither in Conkling nor his methods, was not to be moved. He never summoned the committee and Mr. Conkling never went back to the Senate, but instead took up the practice of law in New York City. Later on, Mr. Platt became a political boss in the state, and through that influence was sent back to the Senate.*

My three great friends in Syracuse to whose houses I went most were Mrs. General Leavenworth, the wife of an attorney,—a tall, queenly, beautiful woman; Mrs. Judge James L. Lawrence, tall, dark, stately—like Mrs. Goodrich;† Mrs. T. T. Davis, a small lively woman with

* The incident referred to was the appointment by President Garfield of their political opponent, Judge William H. Robertson, as Collector of the Port of New York. Their resignation took place May 16, 1881.

† Mrs. Alice Paris Goodrich, of Boston.

snapping black eyes, who was very clever and who wrote a life of Sir Philip Sidney. Mrs. Davis, Mrs. Leavenworth and another friend, Mrs. Granger, used to have a great many young ladies visiting them, in whom I was always expected to become interested.

FREDERICK AYER TO HIS AUNT, HOPE AYER

Syracuse Sunday Eve.
Jany 6th 1850.

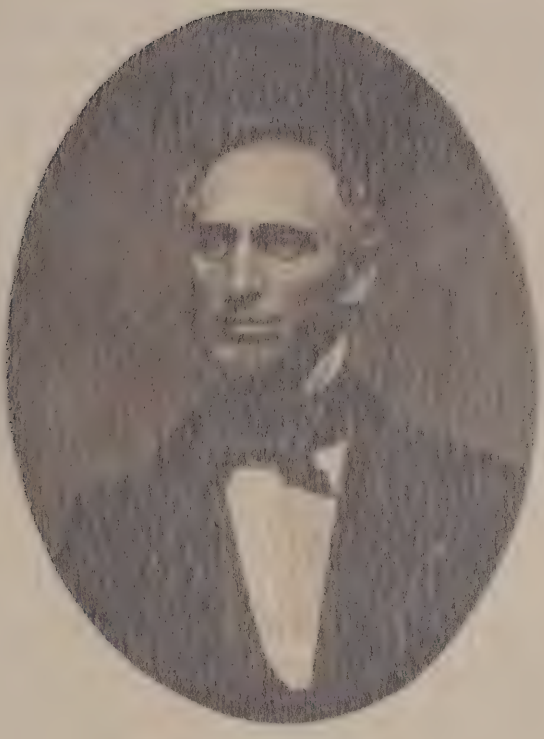
Miss. Hope Ayer

My Dear Aunt. I am thankful for the privilege it becomes mine once more to write you; although I cannot presume to send you anything worthy wrapping under the sanctity of a seal, still you will allow me to treasure the many pleasant recolections of times *long gone by*, it is a satisfaction to recall since the reality is denied me.

I date back to the time when I was cow boy under *your charge*, the *pleasentest hours* of my life; although often told I never could believe, that youth was the time for enjoyment; but I find that manhood brings with it cares and responsibilities which detract from the enjoyment our freedom once allotted us.

You may think strange to hear me speak thus, as it seems but a few days since I was at your side and nurtured by your hand, but I am not insensible that my twenty eighth year finds my head half silverd o'er; if not with age, with hard work & hard thinking—and I flatter myselfe that it has not all been done to no purpose. I have to show for it my situation in life and standing in society, of which Uncle Dwight [Cook] can tell you much better than I can write. . . .

Should you feel any interest in the young lady that



Frederick Ayer
As a Young Man

is to be my wife, (when I find her) I shall be most happy to show her to you, but I will assure you that she will be nothing short of a pattern lady and a moddel wife — shall we settle on the Brown farm? . . .

Remember me with Respect & Kindness to Grandfather Ayer, may God aid thy kind heart & willing hand to bestow every peace & comfort the world can give on his old age.

Remember me to Uncle George and to Grandfather Cooks family.

Sincerely wishing you every happiness & joy the world affords without a sorrow I am Dear Aunt with sentiments of Esteem & friendship your nephew,

FRED.K AYER

IV

J. C. AYER & COMPANY

MY brother's career up to the time I went to Lowell had been as follows: — At the Cook farm, James had a valuable experience in farm and mill work, a jolly time with the boys, and went to the Kimball District School in winter.* Uncle James Cook, visiting his father, became acquainted with my brother, took a fancy to him, took him with him to Lowell, and sent him to Westford Academy to complete his education. After his graduation, James took a clerkship with Mr. Robbins in his drug store [in the summer of 1838], and boarded with Uncle James; and, as Uncle James had no children, I have always understood that my brother supplied that place to some extent, making himself both useful and entertaining, for both of which qualities he had a rare gift. During his leisure hours in the store he applied himself to the study of the compounding of medicine, and qualified as a physician. Mr. Robbins's place, being a leading drug store in the city, was much visited by the physicians, which gave James a rare opportunity of becoming familiar with them, and many of them became interested in him to the extent of taking him with them if they had unusual cases or operations.

After about two years with Mr. Robbins James purchased the store [in April, 1841] and ran it in his own name.† The business suggested to James the need of

* In *Reminiscences of James C. Ayer* no such bright picture of his youth is painted, and much stress is laid on his long hours of work in the mill. This shows how hard Frederick Ayer must have worked, for he always referred to his brother's childhood as happy.

† The purchase price was $2486.61, which he borrowed from his uncle, James Cook. This was just before his twenty-third birthday.

Brookes Mills

some standard remedy which physicians could order for coughs and colds. This suggestion was warmly approved by the doctors; and the result, Cherry Pectoral, was generally ordered by them for those complaints. Without other notice its fame grew until the demand induced him to put it up for the general market. From this time the business of supplying the market absorbed him so much that he took Carlos A. Cook (son of Uncle Nathan) as a partner to run the drug store. The business continued to grow until, in the spring of 1855, James told me it was too confining, and he must have a partner; that he would rather have me than anyone else, although he had two experienced and excellent men in the office who would be acceptable. After looking into the business, I returned to Syracuse and told Mr. McCarthy of my brother's proposition. It so happened that James Sedgwick, a young man whom we had brought up in the store, had recently married one of McCarthy's daughters, so McCarthy was not averse to buying my interest for him.* Consequently the trade was easily made, and a partnership was formed between my brother and myself on April 1st, 1855.†

I lived in my brother's family‡ after coming to Low-

* Frederick Ayer received a cash payment of $33,000 for his interest in the firm. When he asked McCarthy about an allowance for good will, the latter replied: "Help yourself; take *all* you want!"

† The original articles of copartnership are dated June 1, 1855. The total value of the assets of the firm is stated to be $162,000. Frederick Ayer had a one-third interest.

‡ James Cook Ayer had married Josephine Mellen Southwick, November 14, 1850, and had later bought as a residence the "Stone Tavern" on Pawtucket Street, built by Captain Phineas Whiting in 1825. His children were: Frederick Fanning, Henry Southwick, and Lesley Josephine. "Dr. Ayer's family are very agreeable and kind. Mrs. Ayer is a jolly, easy woman about thirty, very girlish in her ways and quite witty. They live in an immense stone house. It is furnished nicely and handsomely, but there is very little display. . . . We dine there almost every Sunday." CORNELIA WHEATON AYER to her aunt, Julia C. Birdseye, January 28, 1859.

ell until I was married, in December, 1858. After that, our families were located near together and their relations were always very cordial.

In this new business I had much to learn. In the winters of '55 and '56 I did the work of a traveller in the Gulf States, by public conveyance where there was such, and on horseback to reach all other trading points. During the summer of 1855 there had been an unusual epidemic of yellow fever through these states, and in several of the interior places I found that our agents had been victims of this epidemic. In one place the agent's store and residence were pointed out as where he was sick and died, and it had not since been opened. . . . Agents in other localities had suffered in the same manner, but their places had not been so neglected as the one above.

Cherry Pectoral had been introduced throughout the Gulf States before, but on this trip I distributed the formula, with specimens, to the physicians in person—both of which, as well as myself, were most cordially received. The general attitude of the physicians was that it was a remedy much needed, and that they were glad to know its composition. This visiting the agents and advertising constituted the business of the traveller—all of which I did in northern Texas, southern Louisiana, southern Alabama and southern Georgia. It was a most interesting winter's experience. One night I stopped with a planter in Louisiana. At supper he said he was going deer-stalking and invited me to go along. The party consisted of the farmer with his rifle, walking ahead of a negro carrying a pine-knot torch over his head. I walked behind the negro. The deer were supposed to glare at the light as it approached, and the planter to see their eyes at some distance ahead. We had walked about a couple of hours through the woods with-

Copartnership.

Lowell, Mass, 1st June, 1855.

Gentlemen:==

I have this day associated with me in the manufacture of Cherry Pectoral and Cathartic Pills, my Brother Mr. Frederick Ayer, and the business will hereafter be conducted under the firm and name of J. C. Ayer & Co.

James C. Ayer.

out starting any game when finally the word "Halt!" came from the head, and the crack of the rifle immediately followed. Investigation showed that the planter had shot one of his own mules, and we stalked home without starting any more game.

When I went into business with my brother the only medicine he had perfected and put upon the market was Cherry Pectoral, but that had acquired a large sale and was in itself a profitable business. My brother was at this time at work on a pill for general use, which was soon after perfected and put on the market as Ayer's Cathartic Pills. Subsequently, through much labor, investigation, experimenting and study, the Sarsaparilla and Hair Vigor were also put on the market, and all of the medicines soon became very popular. A successful and threatening competitor to the Hair Vigor was Hall's Hair Renewer, put up in Nashua, New Hampshire. My brother rather reluctantly consented to buy the exclusive rights to make and sell that preparation under the name of R. P. Hall & Co., which it was then using. I approached Mr. Charles A. Gillis, the then owner of the preparation, and finally closed a deal with him [November 7, 1870] for $100,000, which included the building in which it was made. The purchase proved a profitable one. Mr. Gillis had made quite a fortune and, feeling that he had outgrown the medicine business, had moved to New York. Wall Street soon had his entire fortune.

Returning to Lowell in the spring of 1857, I resumed work in the office and manufactory of the J. C. Ayer Company.* This was in the building owned by the J. C. Ayer Company on Jackson Street which, with the ad-

*The concern was J. C. Ayer & Company, a partnership, until its incorporation on October 16, 1877, with a capital of $200,000.

dition of Pills, Sarsaparilla, and Hair Vigor, and the increase of business, became too small; so we bought a lot on Market Street and built the building now occupied by the J. C. Ayer Company. As the business grew and still more room was required, we bought the old Green schoolhouse on Middle Street which was directly back of the Market Street building. This was used for offices and storage and connected with the Market Street building by bridges. It was here that the Ague Cure was compounded and put on the market. This was when quinine was very high, and being an effective remedy for fever and ague and malaria, took the place of quinine and had a very large sale; latterly quinine has become very cheap and has largely taken the place of the Ague Cure.

My brother was always intensely interested in his business and very jealous of any unfavorable allusion to it. He had a right to this feeling, because the medicines were really scientifically organized and prepared and had the approval of the best physicians of the country, being not at all like the ordinary patent medicines (because not patented, and with the formulas distributed to the druggists and physicians), and had no right to be classified with them.* Therefore when he heard them mentioned in that connection he would always defend them with vigor. The success and popularity of the medicines excited more or less jealousy, which sometimes appeared in unpleasant ways. For instance: a president of one of the banks in Lowell was a notary public, and advertising bills frequently came through his bank for collection, and being a notary, the presi-

* Frederick Ayer worshipped his brother's memory and thoroughly believed in his medicines. Thus at the World's Fair at Chicago in 1893 he caught a bad cold, and could not be happy until he had run out to a drug store and bought a bottle of "Ayer's Cherry Pectoral."

dent generally made it convenient to call at the J. C. Ayer Company office with such bills. At a fair, the Doctor was asked to make as good a show as he could of his preparations, and consequently built a large pyramid of his medicines in various stages of packing, etc., in a prominent place in the room, putting on top a large druggist's show bottle filled with water colored to imitate Cherry Pectoral. The chairman of the committee of inspection and awards of this fair happened to be the president above referred to. The Doctor explained to the committee the arrangement of his pyramid, stating that the show bottle on top was not filled with Cherry Pectoral, but with water colored like it, because if it should happen to break it would not damage the things under it as Cherry Pectoral would. To this the president took exception, called it a fraud for a fling at the Doctor, and would not award the display any honorable mention. The Doctor was very indignant and left word with the man at his office door (myself) that if the said president ever showed his face there again to kick him out without comment.

On another occasion, St. Anne's Church, in which this said president was a deacon, was trying to raise by subscription money for a chime of bells. The money came slowly and the Doctor was appealed to for a subscription, which he declined, but said that he would present one of the bells, putting on an inscription to suit himself. The bell was ordered, and when it came with the inscription, "This Bell presented by Dr. James C. Ayer of Lowell, Massachusetts, Proprietor and Manufacturer of Ayer's Cathartic Pills, by approval of the Wardens," well, you can imagine the fury of the Bank-President-Warden! But money was scarce, and the bell took its place in the belfry with its companions. It hangs

in St. Anne's Church to-day, part of the second oldest set of chimes in New England. Needless to say that every effort possible was made to induce the Doctor to change or remove the inscription, without result.* He had got his revenge.

Any unfavorable allusion to his medicines, as to his business, he took as a personal insult, and the party never escaped without retribution. Do not infer from the above that he was a quarrelsome man. On the contrary, he was one of the most kind-hearted, considerate, genial men you would be likely to meet. He never stepped on anyone's toes intentionally, and nobody must step on his. He was devoted to his family, and playful with his children.

* "Written from memory." BEATRICE AYER PATTON. As a matter of fact, the bell was not cast by Dr. Ayer but by the committee, and no such inscription ever was put on it. Dr. Ayer determined to "stir up" the committee by making such a proposal, and did so; but when they reluctantly acceded to his proposition, he promptly wrote, under date of September 30, 1857, enclosing a cheque and saying, "We will accept the bell as you have already cast it."

Camilla Wheaton Ayer.

V

MARRIAGE AND A HOME

ON December 15, 1858, I was married to Cornelia Wheaton [born June 20, 1835], daughter of Charles Augustus Wheaton, of Syracuse.* It was a noon wedding and we started at once for Lowell, stopping at the Delevan House at Albany. Early in the morning of the 17th a telegram was received saying that Mrs. Wheaton, my wife's mother, had died during the night from heart failure. We immediately returned to Syracuse. This left Mr. Wheaton with several young children, one of whom — Mabel [born April 23, 1855] — had been my wife's especial care. We took her with us to Lowell, where she remained in her sister's care until the autumn of that year, when her father paid us a visit and took her home with him to Syracuse.†

Mr. Wheaton was a hardware merchant and a generally enterprising business man. He arranged a contract with the states of Georgia and South Carolina to build

*Born in Amenia, Dutchess County, N.Y., July 1, 1809. He was sixth in descent from Robert Wheaton, of Swansea, Wales, who emigrated to Salem, married Alice Bowen, and died in Rehoboth in 1696. Robert's great-grandson, Joseph Wheaton, moved from Seekonk, Mass., to New Milford, Conn., in 1744, and his grandson, Augustus (father of Charles Augustus), moved first to Amenia, and then to Pompey, N.Y., in March, 1810.

Augustus Wheaton was a first cousin of Rev. Nathaniel S. Wheaton, a graduate of Yale, who founded Trinity College, Hartford, and wrote an interesting volume of Letters from England. Hon. Laban Wheaton, founder of Wheaton College, and Hon. Henry Wheaton, United States Minister to Prussia and an accepted authority on International Law, were of the same general family.

Corporal Homer J. Wheaton of the 101st Infantry, who immortalized himself in the Great War, was a great-grandson of Charles Augustus Wheaton's brother, Jarvis.

†"It is n't many young men that would take a little stranger right into his affections, as he has Mabel, and I think it shows pretty plainly that he carries a large heart with him." Diary of Frederick Ayer's sister-in-law, Ellen Louisa Wheaton, December 29, 1858.

a railroad extending through the two states, on which he spent about two years time and in which he invested his own fortune. When the War broke out, of course the railroad went to smash like all other unfinished enterprises in the South, and Mr. Wheaton's fortune went with it. After the War there was not vitality enough left in the two states to revive and finish it, although Mr. Wheaton made a great effort to do so.* Mr. Wheaton was celebrated as an abolitionist and his house was a way-station for slaves escaping to Canada; his basement was frequently full of them over night. A census taker calling at his house one day, not finding him in inquired of the ex-slave, old George, at the door, of his whereabouts and his business. The answer was, "Law, Massa, I don't know where he *be*, but he's President of the Underground Railroad!"

The Wheatons did not care anything for society, hav-

* The original contract was made in 1853, and Charles A. Wheaton became a party to it in 1854. The project was to connect Anderson, S. C., with Knoxville, Tenn., by a railway called the Blue Ridge Railroad. As a basis of the enterprise, the State of South Carolina guaranteed the bonds of the road to the extent of several million dollars. In 1856 disputes arose and litigation was begun in the United States Circuit Court for the Northern District of Georgia (No. 286, September Term), and carried on until 1867, when the suit was dismissed in the United States Supreme Court by stipulation of counsel. The reason for this was the repudiation of the bonds by the South Carolina Legislature, which wrecked the road. The case is partially reported, as Anson Bangs & Co. *vs.* Blue Ridge Railroad *et al.*, in 23 Howard (U. S.) 1. The original claim was for upwards of $2,000,000, and the complainants' counsel were Hon. Thomas R. R. Cobb and Senator Tombs.

The Blue Ridge Railroad is now in operation between Belton and Walhalla, S. C., a distance of 44.2 miles, and is, for practical purposes, a subsidiary of the Southern Railway Company. Three-fourths of the rough grading to Knoxville had been completed prior to the Civil War. All idea of resuming the work has been definitely abandoned.

In Mr. Wheaton's letters to his family there are frequent references to "the tunnel." This is on the southwestern side of Stump House Mountain, Oconee County, S. C., and its location is clearly shown on the United States Topographical Survey map. The tunnel was to be a mile and a quarter long, and four-fifths of it was dug.

ing always too much business on hand at home. Mrs. Wheaton used to trade at the store and sometimes brought Cornelia with her. Mrs. McCarthy, discovering that I was interested in Cornelia, used to invite us to her house together. Later she went South to teach, and I lost her.* Shortly after her return, when I was living in Lowell, Mrs. McCarthy invited me to visit her, and when I returned I found Cornelia there. After this we made a trip with Mrs. McCarthy to Niagara Falls, arranged by her so as to give me a chance to see more of Cornelia.

["The Doctor will accommodate himself to my wishes about going away, and I have hardly a doubt but I shall be with you next week. Then we will take a drive or two 'round through the refreshing shades of the vale where the whip-poor-will sings. Will we not?"†]

["Niagara is accomplished much to the satisfaction of all concerned, I trust. . . . I must say my impressions of Monsieur Ayer are much more favorable, and that he improves vastly upon a further acquaintance."‡]

This was the only trip I ever made with her before our marriage, except a buggy drive of fourteen miles to Pompey Hill to spend the day with Judge Victory Birdseye, Cornelia's grandfather,§ and his family. Aunt

* She left Syracuse on February 29, 1856, to teach the children of Mr. John C. Davis, a planter, at "Cluella," Shocco Springs, Warren County, N. C. She returned to Syracuse, June 29, 1857.

† Frederick Ayer to Cornelia Wheaton, August 5, 1858. The trip began on August 24.

‡ Cornelia Wheaton to her aunt, Julia C. Birdseye, August 30, 1858.

§ Fifth in descent from Deacon John Birdseye, of Stratford, Conn., who died in 1690. His great-grandson, Rev. Nathan Birdseye (Victory's grandfather), was graduated from Yale College, and after a pastorate at West Haven removed to Oronoque (in Stratford) in 1759, and died there in 1818, aged one hundred three years, five months, nine days. After he was a hundred years old he rode on horseback to the Stratford church, a distance of five miles, with two of his sons (both over seventy) walking on either side of him, and conducted the services. Being almost blind he repeated the chapter

Hepsey Beebe, Mrs. Judge Birdseye's sister (Mrs. Wheaton's aunt), was the one who, after she had refused one of her suitors, walked to the gate with him. As he mounted his horse, he cried: "Damn you, Hepsey, I love you, anyhow!" and rode away.

FREDERICK AYER TO CORNELIA WHEATON

October 15, 1858

My own dearest Corneille, Your note of Monday Evening is just at hand and you will think it strange when I tell you how much satisfaction it affords me. But when you consider that I am living on the hope of spending my life with you, you will appreciate the value to me of any indication I can get of your regard for or confidence in me. To deserve both is the ambition of my life—and you have granted a little to my ambition. . . . Do not undertake more preparations than are necessary for your own personal comfort: it will be so easy to make any additional you may desire here. These sewing machines canter by the mile over fine stitches —and I am quite sure I should like to turn them for you. . . . Yours fondly, Fred.

In Lowell we boarded with my uncle and aunt, Mr.

and psalms from memory, and preached the sermon much to the pleasure and edification of the congregation. A house he may have lived in, and where his daughter, Hannah, was married in 1765, still stands on the original Birdseye land, and the place is known as Prayer Spring Farm.

Victory Birdseye was born in Cornwall, Conn., in 1782. He was graduated from Williams College in 1804, studied law at Lansingburg, N. Y., with his uncle, Gideon Tomlinson, and settled at Pompey, N. Y., in June, 1807. He married Electa Beebe in 1813, served two terms in Congress (the Fourteenth and Twenty-seventh), and died at Pompey, in 1853. A fine oil portrait of him, by Thayer, hangs in the Court House at Syracuse (a copy being owned by Francis W. Kittredge, of Boston), and oil portraits of his maternal grandparents, Beach and Charity Shelton Tomlinson, are owned by Louise Ayer Gordon.

James Cook

and Mrs. James Cook, in a house which stood at the north end of the Lowell and Andover Railroad Station.

["I have delightful rooms. You know we are boarding with the family of Fred's uncle, the Mayor of the city. Said family consists of 'His Honor, the Mayor,' Mr. Cook, his wife and her sister, Miss Mary Ann Ayer, a maiden of about fifty years of age. There are two servant girls, and Fred, Mabel and myself beside. . . . I have two rooms and the privileges of bath room . . . etc. . . . My parlor is about the size and length of Mrs. McCarthy's. It is beautifully furnished, though I have not everything for it yet. I have handsome lace curtains, handsome carpet, furniture is carved black walnut and green plush,—sofas, easy chairs, ottomans, etc., a splendid piano, which I selected at the manufactory of Chickering in Boston, pictures, grate, and I am to have a superb mantel mirror. . . . Mrs. Cook is a very stiff, cold, precise woman, and her sister a sort of echo. . . . Mr. Cook is a very social, kind man. . . . I have just returned from a ride with Fred. . . . There are charming drives around Lowell. . . . I don't see a great deal of my husband. He leaves for the office right after breakfast, comes home generally a few minutes before dinner, and stays about half an hour after; comes home just in time for tea, and *spends all his evenings with me*, which I enjoy very much, I can assure you."]*

During the summer I purchased the house and lot on the corner of Pawtucket and School Streets, enlarged and fixed up the house, and moved into it in October, 1859. We lived in this house until the new one was built on the same lot, into which we moved in the summer of 1877, when Louise was one year old. All four children were born in the old house [Ellen Wheaton, November 28, 1859; James Cook, October 13, 1862;

* Cornelia Wheaton Ayer to her aunt, Julia C. Birdseye, January 28, 1859.

Charles Fanning, November 22, 1865; and Louise Raynor, January 17, 1876]. We had been in the new house about two years when Cornelia died [January 9, 1878]. Her sister, Florence Wheaton, was living with us at the time, and continued there afterwards in charge of the house. Cornelia, Mother and my brother James all died within three years [1878–80].

In February, 1863, I went to California and did the business of traveller in that state and Nevada for the J. C. Ayer Company. I went by steamer to Colon, crossed the Isthmus and thence by steamer to San Francisco.

Reddington & Company were at that time our agents in San Francisco and had spread our medicines to some extent through their customers. I travelled the country thoroughly, by such conveyances as there were from place to place, and to remote places on horseback, making agents at every trading point and advertising the preparations, also visiting the physicians and leaving with them specimens and formulas,— all of which was most acceptable, affording them as it did reliable preparations which they could prescribe with confidence (knowing their composition), and a very large sale followed. In that then frontier country reliable druggists were not always at hand and physicians were puzzled to get medicines on which they could depend for their patients. Hence the large sale that followed.

While in the west, I met my brother-in-law, Dr. A. R. Morgan,* who had gone there for his health six months before. When I was about to return, he was anxious to return with me, and I can never forget the painful expression that came into his face when he finally said that his health would not justify his return. He returned six months later having meanwhile visited Australia.

* Married Ellen Louisa Wheaton, October 4, 1860.

The Lowell House

It was my intention to go by stage across the country. I went to the stage office in Sacramento to engage a passage. The agent invited me to go to the carriage house with him and, pointing to a coach that was literally riddled and cut to pieces with shots, said: "That was the last coach over and the Indians are on a rampage. If you want to take the chances I will book you; but if you have any responsibilities at home I advise you not to go this way."

I took the steamer from San Francisco to Nicaragua, where I spent two days visiting as much of the country adjacent to the port as I could, then the steamer across the lake to the San Juan River, where I, with the other passengers, embarked on two river boats for the Caribbean Sea. It was intended to make the passage down the river in one day, but the steamer was late and we tied up to the bank for the night. The boats were day boats only and were built entirely open on the sides above the deck, with awnings, and there were no accommodations for sleeping. Some of the passengers had grass hammocks, a Nicaragua product, which they strung up above the deck and made into quite comfortable accommodations for the night. The lights on all the boats called a great variety of animals, which filled the trees and called from their various locations in a variety of voices, from the chatter of the monkeys to the screeching of the owls and the growling of what might be panthers and a great variety of unnameable creatures. Even if one had not been interested in their music, it was too oppressive to admit of sleep. In the morning we made our way to the Caribbean Sea, took our steamer, and rolled away to New York. I had been gone six months to a day.

In the spring of 1864, while in Washington, I rode

out on horseback to General Slocum's headquarters in Virginia. After a chat with the General, and while sitting on my horse, ready to leave, he said: "By the way, I have a little negro here that came into our lines from the rebels a few days ago. I'm going to move to-day and would like to have you take him North with you. We call him 'Jeff' and his story is that he belonged to General Williams, that the General called him in the morning and gave him a few pennies to get some eggs for his breakfast. After wandering about a week or more he came within our lines, and to the questions of where he came from, etc., he said: 'I 's General Willums nigger. He gave me some pennies and sent me out to get some eggs for his breakfast.' Then, shoving his hand down into his trousers pocket, he pulled out a few pennies, and said: 'Here 's de pennies, and I 'specks General Willums is waiting for his eggs!'"

I said to General Slocum, "Call him out! Let me see him!" He called to Jeff, who walked very deliberately out of the tent—a little negro less than three feet tall, very black, hair curling tight to his head, with a military cap under his arm, indicating his rank—walked slowly up to the General, never noticing me until the General said: "Jeff, I 'm going to move to-day and I can't take you with me. Here 's a gentleman who 'll take you North with him." At this he turned, rolled his eyes up at me and turned on his heel, saying: "No, sah! I go wid no such lookin' gen'l'man as dat!" and deliberately walked back to the tent as though in command of the army.

With Mr. William Kittredge, father of Francis W. Kittredge, and three other gentlemen, we called on President Lincoln at the White House. He had just finished his morning work, and being very warm weather, he was

in his shirt sleeves, with his vest unbuttoned, without a cravat, and his shirt collar so wet with perspiration that it lay flat on his shoulders. Before arriving the party requested me to act as spokesman and introduce them. Mr. Lincoln received us standing, and looked terribly tired, bored, and lifeless, until, after introducing myself and friends, I said: "Mr. President, we have called to pay our respects to our President; but none of us has a favor to ask—not even a country post office." At this he woke up, and rushed at me with both hands, took both mine and shaking them vigorously, said: "Gentlemen, I am glad to see you. You are the first men I have seen since I have been here that did n't want something!" After a brief conversation we bade the President good-bye, with another vigorous hand-shaking, and never saw him again.

VI

AN AMERICAN CAPITALIST

TREMONT & SUFFOLK MILLS

THE Tremont Mills and the Suffolk Manufacturing Company were two corporations situated on opposite sides of Suffolk Street, Lowell. I think it was in the panic of 1857 that both failed. After they had been idle for two or three years, my brother and I bought nearly half of the outstanding capital stock of each corporation, and, with the consent of the other stockholders, reorganized the two into one corporation—the Tremont and Suffolk Mills [August 19, 1871].

Much of the old machinery was sold off and new and improved took its place. This machinery was organized to make plain cotton sheeting, drillings, cotton flannels and blankets, and was first for a short time under the management of Cousin Albert Cook (son of Nathan) as agent, since when the mills have had several men in that capacity. The company went through the ordinary trials in bringing out its goods and marketing them successfully, but promised success from the beginning. The old mill buildings have been much improved and several new mills have been built on each side of the street, steam power being added to drive them. They are now as prosperous as any mills in New England.

One of the early treasurers of the Tremont and Suffolk Mills was John C. Birdseye, of Pompey Hill, Onondaga County, New York, uncle of my first wife. Mr. Birdseye went to California immediately after the discovery of gold there in 1849. In about 1870 he came home and came to Lowell to visit my family. My brother

took a great fancy to him and persuaded him to remain as treasurer of the Tremont and Suffolk Mills, which he did, filling the position with marked ability and success until he was obliged to retire on account of his health. During this time—seven or eight years—he lived with my family, and was always a great favorite. Towards the end of this time, he was terribly sick and so crippled with rheumatism that I often wondered how he could work. . . . He returned to his home at Pompey Hill, went to La Porte, Indiana, and died two or three years later [February 27, 1894].*

MICHIGAN LANDS

In the early '60's Judge William L. Avery, of Michigan, was made United States Consul to South Africa. On a visit home he came to the office of the J. C. Ayer Company and solicited the agency of our preparations for South Africa which we gladly gave him and which he handled with success for several years.

At one time it was difficult for him to get exchange to pay our account, and he sent six tierces of wine with instructions to sell them and apply the proceeds. I tried the wine dealers and druggists in Boston and New York with samples of the wines, but found no purchasers, all saying that they did not know the wines, and consequently could not classify and sell them under any known head,—in short, could not sell them at all. My brother put part of them in his cellar, I took the balance, and our guests found them most delicious.

On Avery's next visit we told him of our non-success in selling the wine and he was very greatly surprised, saying that it was a lot from the Constantia Vineyards

* "Last two sentences written down from memory." BEATRICE AYER PATTON.

which he happened to get hold of, and was not in the market, but generally ordered in advance by the crowned heads of Europe. Well, the wines evaporated from my cellar down to a small stock which I had bottled and left when I went to Europe in 1873. On my return it had all disappeared, although left under a Yale lock. It developed that William, the gardener, had found and disposed of it. Uncle John Birdseye said to this: "What a shame that that choice wine should go down William's gullet, when kerosene would have done just as well!"

Mr. Avery had a brother, Peris J. Avery, in Michigan, who organized the Lake Superior Ship Canal Railway and Iron Company, capital, $4,000,000, for the purpose of building a canal from Houghton to Lake Superior, North, and to improve the river from Houghton to Keweenaw Bay, and to do any railroad building or almost any other thing. With this Avery got a grant of alternate sections of lands in the North Peninsula of Michigan, amounting to 472,000 acres, and made his selections for minerals as well as timber.

To make its improvements, the company mortgaged its lands, and the mortgages were sold in Michigan and New York. Other obligations were created by the company which became too heavy for its financial ability. He then wrote for his brother, William L., to come home and help him carry out his big project. William L. naturally came to us for assistance, but the load was too heavy for our undertaking and the company failed. We subsequently bought a quantity of the bonds at pretty low prices considering the amount of property covered by them, and held them in common with some of the original subscribers, mostly in New York. As the work for which the grant of lands was given had not

been performed, the bonds were worthless until that should be done; accordingly the bondholders in New York and ourselves got together and raised funds to finish the canal to Lake Superior, which was done, and a demand made for title to said lands, which was finally procured after several years of suits and negotiations.*

In this Theodore M. Davis was an active factor. He became receiver of a bank in New York that held a larger amount of bonds than any individual and also held nearly all the stock of the company. The stock held by the bank had to be sold at auction. My brother's estate bought one half and I the other, which, with our bonds, gave us the largest influence in the company. Mr. Davis was made President and I was Director and Treasurer, and made the company's first lease of an iron mine on the Menominee Range to a firm in Milwaukee.† John M. Longyear, of Marquette, Michigan, then a young man, was made local agent, whose business it

* "Before the canal was completely finished, it came into my private ownership and I also purchased the river improvement south from Houghton. These ship canals I ran and took the tolls on for about three years and then sold them to the United States Government." FREDERICK AYER.

† "The first lease of an iron mine was made to Mr. James J. Hagerman for whom Mr. Ayer had the highest regard for many years and to whom he contributed very substantial backing in the construction of the Colorado Midland Road which Mr. Hagerman undertook somewhere in the '80's and carried through successfully against all sorts of obstacles and natural difficulties. Mr. Hagerman once told me that when negotiations were first begun with the Lake Superior Ship Canal, Railway & Iron Company for a lease of the lands on which was finally opened the famous Chapin Mine, the subject of leasing lands on royalty for iron mining was a new one and no system had been developed for it, so that the provisions of such leases were entirely experimental. However, he laid his proposition before the Company's directors and they sat around the table considering it for a long time with nobody daring to take the initiative and sign the lease. Finally, Mr. Ayer reached across the table, took the lease and signed his name to it. As Mr. Hagerman expressed it to me, he was the only one who had courage enough to take the bull by the horns and break the deadlock." CHARLES FANNING AYER.

was to care for the property, see that the timber was properly estimated for sale, to sell the timber, and to lease the mines,—all on terms approved by the directors. His salary was $15,000 a year and a commission of 2 per cent on all sales and leases. Mr. Longyear had been several years in Michigan as a woodsman, estimating timber and running out landmarks and sections. This gave him a splendid opportunity to observe the country, and, being something of a geologist, he used the information greatly to his benefit. On one occasion, when in Marquette, I asked Longyear if the mineral lands had all been located and purchased, to which he replied: "No." I asked why he did not locate some for himself. He said he had no money. I said: "If you will locate some lands for you and me I will furnish the money to pay for them, take the deeds in my name, and when they have paid for themselves with interest and expenses by the sale of timber or otherwise, I will give you a quit-claim deed for an undivided half interest in them." Under this arrangement he located some 24,000 acres of what he considered the most promising mineral lands, and they were shortly paid for by the sale of timber, when I gave him the deed as agreed. Several large iron mines have been opened on the lands since then, and the investment has been a very profitable one to both of us; and I see no reason why it should not continue to be for many years.

Ten years ago, more or less [about 1903], under the same arrangement, he commenced the location of lands for copper in Wisconsin through Mr. Burhans, who is to have a small interest in them, and under this arrangement he has located about 50,000 acres, which I have paid for.

LOWELL & ANDOVER RAILROAD

Prior to 1873 there was only one railroad (the Boston & Lowell) between Lowell and Boston. This road ran in connection with a road north through New Hampshire and General George Stark was president of both roads. He was very autocratic by nature, and being president of these two roads made him abnormally so, both in his own estimation and in the management of the roads. He treated the patrons of the roads as if they had no rights. He made it difficult to get freight transported and handled. For instance, Mr. William Kittredge (father of Francis W. Kittredge) had a coal yard on a branch from the Lowell road, about one-eighth mile long, which accommodated Kittredge and several other patrons of the road. If a train-load of coal came for Kittredge and there happened to be a car unloading flour or some other merchandise on the branch, Stark's instructions were not to wait for that car to be unloaded and run off, but to dump the coal by the side of the track anywhere. Other patrons were treated in a similar manner, including the J. C. Ayer Company.

My brother remonstrated with Stark several times about his methods of treating his patrons. On one occasion, the J. C. Ayer Company had several carloads of high-proof alcohol shipped from Boston. It came on platform cars in very hot weather, and was two days on the way. When it came Rolfe, the local agent of the road, sent word to me of its arrival and asked me to go up and see the condition it was in. The alcohol, being very volatile and affected by the heat, had started every barrel leaking, and all the cars were dripping with alcohol. I arranged with Mr. Rolfe to receive the alcohol as it was, and to keep account of it as the casks were

emptied, and send a bill for what was found to be short. This we agreed was the only practical way to determine what the leakage was. I sent the bill to Rolfe in due time, amounting to less than $200, but, not hearing from him I called his attention to it, and he said he had given the bill to General Stark and that I had better see him. Stark went to Boston every morning, and while his train was standing at the North Station, I stepped into the car and spoke to him about the alcohol bill. On being questioned, I told him the measurement of the alcohol had been made according to Mr. Rolfe's suggestion and my agreement with him, and that the bill simply represented the leakage. Stark swung himself back in the seat and said: "I don't think we owe you anything for alcohol." I replied: "General, you know the circumstances of the shipment on platform cars in hot weather." He said: "Yes, if you think the Boston & Lowell owes you anything you 'd better sue them." I said: "General, you know we can't afford to sue the Boston & Lowell Railroad for a couple of hundred dollars." "Well," he replied, "that 's your remedy," upon which I left him.

Returning to the office, I found my brother sitting at his desk, and told him of the conversation. He rose to his feet in great anger and said: "We have stood enough from that damned upstart, and I believe another way can be found for a road into Boston." He asked me if I knew of an engineer who could find one. I told him of Cyrus Latham, a resident engineer, who had just returned from doing a similar job. He said: "Send for him immediately."

Within an hour Mr. Latham was in the office and was engaged to work out a route from Lowell to connect with the Boston & Maine Road. Latham immediately started on this enterprise, and we got together at

our office a few men who would be interested in the new road, including Mr. William Kittredge, Josiah Gates, General Fox (then agent of the Middlesex Mills), and a fund for the preliminary survey was immediately subscribed,—and that was the beginning of the Lowell & Andover Railroad. It was known that the Boston & Maine Railroad were anxious to get into Lowell, and this was their opportunity. Before starting to build the road a contract was made [June 3, 1873] by the Lowell & Andover with the Boston & Maine for a 99 year lease at 7 per cent on the cost of the road, which was not to exceed $750,000. At this time the Boston & Lowell stock was selling upward of $150 and within a short time after the Lowell & Andover Road was in operation, the Boston & Lowell stock went down to $56 a share.

Stark was told of this project, but made no change in his methods, and sneered at the idea; and even after the road was built said it never would be run. But it did run very successfully, and the stockholders of the Boston & Lowell Road had no further use for Stark.

General Fox was made president of the Lowell & Andover Road during its organization, after which he resigned in my favor, and I have been its president to this time [1913]. The road runs from the Central Street Station and the Middlesex Mills (Lowell) through Tewksbury, connecting with the Boston & Maine Railroad near Ballardvale.

[In 1873 Mr. and Mrs. Frederick Ayer went abroad with their daughter, Ellen Wheaton Ayer, who was put in school at Fontainebleau, and they then travelled about for something over six months in Italy, Switzerland, France, and England.]

VII

PUBLIC SERVICE: SECOND MARRIAGE

IT always seemed to me that my father, Frederick Ayer, took more pride in his part in suppressing the small-pox epidemic in Lowell in 1871 than in any other achievement of his career. He recounted the events of this period to me a number of times, and the following sets them forth to the best of my recollection:*—

"A small-pox epidemic had Lowell in its grip to a degree approaching hysteria.† Deaths occurred with such rapidity that burials were being made at night to attract as little attention as possible and for fear that a panic would seize the city, necessitating the closing of all the mills and other industries. Substantially nothing was being done by the Board of Health to combat the epidemic, and my father, who was then an Alderman,‡ was very outspoken in his criticism of the inertia of the Board of Health and City administration. This resulted in his election (or appointment) to the Board of Health, and the immediate resignation of all the other members.§ At this juncture he was confined to his bed in a run-down

* Written by Frederick Ayer, Jr.

† The epidemic began in January, 1871, and reached its climax in September of that year. The total number of cases for the entire epidemic was upwards of 570, with 192 deaths.

‡ Elected to serve for one year from the first Monday in January, 1871.

§ This is not strictly accurate. The trouble was precipitated by the District Medical Society, which passed a resolution on July 26 recommending that a special commission be created by the City Government to combat the disease, but by inadvertence *sent it to the City Council, instead of to the Board of Health,* as was intended. This caused a bitter controversy, and on September 15 an entirely new Board of Health of five members was elected, Frederick Ayer being designated as chairman, the other members named being Abel T. Atherton, Henry C. Howe, Benjamin Walker, and H. C. Church.

condition and suffering from a severe attack of boils. He was not in condition to accept, and did not wish to undertake the responsibility thus placed upon him, but the morning found all the important mill owners sitting on his doorstep, begging him to take hold of the situation and prevent a general closing of the industries of the city, saying that no one else could do it. He finally acquiesced and, once committed, acted with vigor. The new Board was organized on September 18, and at once appointed a Board of Consulting Physicians, seven in number, to take charge of the medical situation.

"The difficulties to be surmounted were calculated to discourage anyone, as they had the old Board of Health. Vaccination was regarded with great suspicion. There were no laws (and the urgency of the situation did not permit waiting for legislation) for compulsory vaccination,* and for the moving and isolation of patients, for compelling common carriers to fumigate, or any such measures for the prevention of the spread of the epidemic. Neither was there a suitable hospital † nor a sufficient supply of nurses.

"In handling the legal situation my father had the able and whole-hearted co-operation of his attorney, Mr. A. P. Bonney. They conferred with the Governor and decided that (with the situation as critical as it was, and with the Governor's promise to support them in so far as he was able) they would take such measures as were called for, regardless of legal authority, and trusting in popular sentiment to back them up. Accordingly a force of volunteer special police officers was sworn in,

* In point of fact there were such laws: on April 10 a general vaccination had been ordered, and about 9000 persons were vaccinated.

† A special small-pox hospital had been provided by the city, but the only reason it had sufficed was because the old Board of Health mistakenly considered that it had no legal right to enforce removals.

and compulsory vaccination of everybody was inaugurated.* I believe serum and medical advice was secured from the Johns Hopkins Hospital at Baltimore. This institution also supplied a considerable number of sisters, who at that time occupied the position of the trained nurse of to-day. A wooden hospital was built outside the city exclusively for small-pox patients, and this structure was completed within a week. All public vehicles were compelled to be fumigated with burning sulphur every night. This treatment was also applied to all the doctors, who were put into a box with only the face protruding, and thus fumigated between visits to patients. The Fire Department was called out every night to wash down the city streets. All dwellings where cases of small-pox occurred were immediately isolated, and a guard was put over them to enforce this isolation. In case of death or the removal of the patient, the patient's bedding and such articles were taken and burned and the house fumigated.

"The greatest difficulty occurred in the enforced moving of patients, to which strenuous objections were raised. One of the first was the case of a grocer who lived over his store, and whose daughter had contracted the disease. He barricaded his door and appeared in an upper window announcing that he would shoot any officer who attempted to force an entrance. Volunteers were called for to move this patient, and practically the whole police force responded. When a detail armed with crowbars and implements for forcing entrance was sent to move the grocer's daughter, he reconsidered and offered no resistance. After this no further difficulty was encountered. The result was a complete vindication of

*About 15,000 persons were vaccinated at this time.

these aggressive methods, and within a very short time the epidemic was completely stamped out.*

"My father said that he used frequently to hear of small boys who had been named after him, and that before the next Congressional election he was offered the Republican nomination, and the Democrats came to him and said that if he would accept the Republican nomination they would not put up anyone to run against him. This, however, he declined."

The J. C. Ayer Company agent in Brazil was a young man from Worcester, Massachusetts, who was known in Brazil as the "butterfly and bug catcher." He became interested in and the companion of a young man, José Carlos Rodriguez, who, at the age of twenty-two, had acquired the distinction of the title of Doctor of Laws and was made Assistant Secretary of State of Brazil [*i.e.*, Private Secretary to Dom Pedro II].

He was a Republican and did not believe in the Brazilian government. He had some associates who sympathized with his views, and with them planned a *coup d'état*, for which purpose it was necessary to get the Secretary of State away from Rio de Janeiro for a time. For this purpose Rodriguez persuaded him that his personal attention was necessary in some distant province of Brazil, and so convinced him of the fact that the Secretary started on the journey, leaving the affairs of state in the hands of Rodriguez. After some two days time, when Rodriguez and his associates had got their plans well under way, the Secretary quite unexpectedly

*The number of cases and deaths for the most critical period of the epidemic tells its own story:

Month	*Cases*	*Deaths*
September	212	55
October	94	30
November	6	1

returned and of course the revolutionary project vanished and its promoters with it. Rodriguez fled to the mountains, where he was concealed and fed and cared for, for about a year—our agent, meantime, being on the alert to get him on to an American vessel and away from the country. The opportunity came, and our agent got him aboard, concealed in a packing-case, with letters to the J. C. Ayer Company in Lowell. Rodriguez eventually blew into the office* with his letters and with very little knowledge of the English language. We immediately gave him employment in translating our printed matter into Portuguese, Spanish, Italian, and French, with all of which languages he was familiar. He soon procured through the press in Boston and New York other work of the same kind, which gave him a fair living.

While in concealment he read and studied the Bible, and became a Protestant. He continued his interest in the politics of Brazil and published a paper in Portuguese exploiting his views, which he sent to Brazil for sale.† The demand for the weekly paper grew large. It became so great an annoyance to the Emperor and government, that they passed a law excluding it, which ended that enterprise. Later on the Emperor visited this country [in 1876] and sent for Rodriguez to visit him in New York, which he did. On this occasion the Emperor urged him strenuously to return to Brazil, promising to forgive him all his acts, reinstate him in every form of citizenship and to do much for him, saying that they needed men like him. Rodriguez

*Dr. Rodriguez's arrival in Lowell was as early as 1870, for Cornelia Wheaton Ayer wrote on March 7 of that year of his being with the family in Washington.

†He had two papers, *O Novo Mundo* and *Rivista Industrial.*

L. C. Ayer.

did not trust him and did not accept his invitation to return.

Rodriguez was a very interesting man, intense in everything that interested him, and very entertaining; a most agreeable companion. An incident which occurred while my brother and several of us were breakfasting at a New York hotel is illustrative of his intensity of thought: Rodriguez was deeply engrossed in conversation when he saw the colored waiter at his elbow presenting a long, finely printed menu. He glanced at it, saw the immensity of it and said to the darkey: "Bring me what *you* likes best!"

Rodriguez went to London and practiced international law in connection with Brazil until the Emperor abdicated [in 1889], when he returned to his country, where he has been a very influential factor in the new government. [Dr. Rodriguez is now a well-known authority on Americana, owner and editor of the *Jornal do Commercio*, the largest newspaper in South America, and a most cultivated, philanthropic, and distinguished personage in Rio de Janeiro.]

My brother was a most indefatigable worker. His business, extending practically over the world and putting him in personal communication with the principal nationalities in a business way, afforded him an immense field for study and work. For many years he wrote the Ayer's American Almanack, which was issued in fourteen languages, with calendars adapted to the longitude of the different countries for which it was issued. He also wrote the newspaper and postal advertising matter and did much of the most important correspondence of the office. He was a great reader of authors like Darwin and Huxley, and a student of the sciences and history, with an intense interest in every new development. He under-

stood the Portuguese language, and at about the time he was taken sick was intending to visit Brazil, where the medicines were very popular.

Until my brother's guardians were appointed in 1877, our interests in the medicine business were owned two-thirds by him, one-third by me, and our investments were mainly made jointly in the same proportion, so that they could be taken care of from the office in one interest. At the time of the appointment of his guardians I bought one-sixth interest of the business from the estate, which made our interests in the business equal. Our interests in investments outside the medicine business were adjusted by purchase and sale of properties from one to the other, and in this way were mainly separated, each holding his property separate. When I bought the one-sixth interest, it was agreed that I should have entire management of the business for an indefinite period or, at my option, as treasurer of the Company at a salary of $15,000 a year. I continued the management under this arrangement until June, 1893, when, tired of the confinement and responsibility, I retired in favor of Alonzo S. Covell, formerly treasurer of the Tremont & Suffolk Mills, who succeeded me as treasurer of the Company and was subsequently succeeded by Mr. Rose. His successor was Dr. C. H. Stowell, who is now in charge of the business. All the above arrangements were made jointly by representatives of the estate and myself.

When my brother was taken sick, I supplied the family with money from the J. C. Ayer Company for their expenses until the sum got so large that my attorney, A. P. Bonney, thought I was taking great risk in continuing to furnish them money, as when my brother should recover he might say I had done it without authority and repudiate it. I told Mrs. J. C. Ayer of this

advice, which displeased her very much. She replied excitedly that where there was property in families it always made trouble and that it would in this case; consequently we might as well consider ourselves enemies, as well now as any time. I remonstrated with her on this, saying that I could see no reason for any disagreement or trouble between us on account of the money; that she ought to have all the money she wanted; it was only the question of the legal way in which it should be furnished to avoid the trouble and disagreement which she anticipated. She had apparently made up her mind that a disagreement was inevitable, and from this time acted accordingly. The guardians were appointed, consisting of Mrs. Ayer, Frederick Fanning Ayer, Benjamin Dean and Jacob Rogers.

In my brother's will* he had made me and his son Frederick Fanning his executors and trustees. After the feeling expressed by Mrs. Ayer in regard to our future relations, I did not care to act under the will and withdrew. Mrs. Ayer insisted that every member of the family and all old mutual friends interested should take sides, either with her or with me. Accordingly she went to William Parke and told him that he could not be friendly to me and be a friend of hers and that he must choose whose he would be. He promptly decided that he would be my friend anyhow, and regretted that he could n't be hers at the same time. She went to Albert Cook with the same proposition, who promptly made the same decision saying: "I'll stick by Uncle Fred, anyhow." Parke and I were beneficiaries in my brother's will, and Mrs. Ayer, desiring to cut us out, brought suit to break the will, which was decided in our favor. Mrs. Ayer's attorney in this case was Judge J. G. Abbott and

*James Cook Ayer died July 3, 1878.

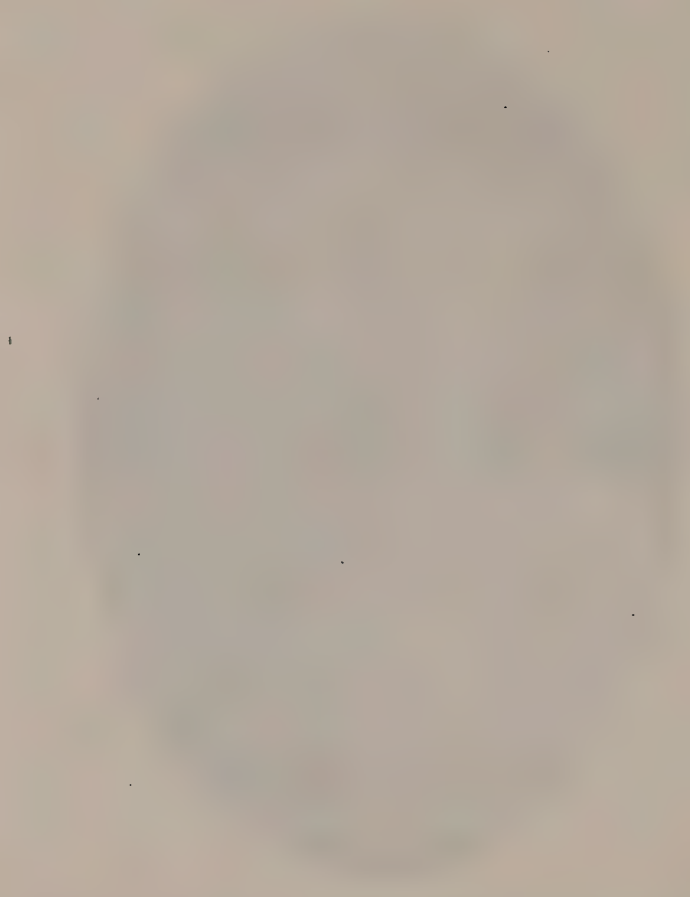
mine was A. P. Bonney. Abbott brought the suit in his own way and tried it in his own way with several witnesses. Our side offered no witnesses, but Mr. Bonney argued the case with great power and effect, taking a different tack from what Abbott had anticipated; in fact he did not touch the case from any of the points Abbott had presented, to the latter's great discomfiture. Abbott attempted to meet Bonney's argument, but utterly failed. Judge Brooks decided it in our favor and the will was executed as it had been made.

In the year 1883, while on a visit to my sister-in-law, Mrs. N. P. Langford [formerly Emma Wheaton], in St. Paul, I met Miss Ellen Barrows Banning.* Mrs. Langford was very anxious that I should marry, and had presented to me a number of what she considered eligible women. One day I said to her: "What is the matter with Miss Ellen Banning?" I found that she considered her more highly than any girl of her acquaintance, though a little young for such responsibilities, and having previously made up my own mind, I was pleased to be agreed with in this fashion. In the winter of 1883–84 she and her sister May visited me in Lowell, and took lessons at the School of Expression, in Boston. I became engaged to her on this visit and we were married July 15, 1884. We went immediately abroad, taking with us May Banning and my daughter, Ellen Ayer. I think we returned to our home in Lowell about November 1.

*Ellen Barrows Banning was born in Philadelphia, May 7, 1853, and was of English, Dutch and Irish descent. Her father was William Lowber Banning, and her mother, Mary Alicia Sweeney, daughter of Frederick Morgan Sweeney and Rachel Ormsby. Miss Ormsby's mother was a Quakeress of Pennsylvania ancestry, but both her father and her husband were natives of Ireland.

Ellen Banning's paternal great-grandfather, John Banning, was a member of the Delaware Assembly, Treasurer of Kent County, and one of the three electors who cast Delaware's vote for George Washington as President at the first Electoral College in 1788. He married a well-known beauty, Eliz-

Ellen Banning Myer.



SCHWEIZERHOF & LUZERNERHOF, LUCERNE

HAUSER FRÈRES, PROPRIÉTAIRES.

My darling little daughter Louise.

Uncle John and Auntie have written me about you and the little cousins - about your going into the big Ocean to bathe and what good times you have playing together. How nice it is to have the Aunties and cousins with you and Uncle John and Frank to visit you, and in a few days Aunt Mabel will be with you to tell all about her long Journey.

I wish yo would write a letter to me if you go fishing and what you catch —

and tell me about Jack and all the interesting things you can think of

The picture on this sheet is our hotel in four buildings and our windows look out on to the lake— I have made a pencil mark under our windows— and there are "steamers with moke in em;" and sail boats and row boats flying about all the time, as if they were alive. You will come here some day and see them and the big mountains all around the lake that run way up into the clouds.

The people here are very curious. You could understand them because they speak frech but I cannot understand them or make them understand me. I wish I could speak French as you can so that I could talk with them. They use dogs, cows and donkeys as well as horses to haul their carts. Yesterday I saw a horse & cow harnessed side by side to a cart hauling a load of boards - and sometimes they harness a cow & dog or donkey & cow or dog together, making the queerest looking teams you ever saw.

The women carry large baskets of vegetables and tubs of water on their heads, and the children go bear headed & bear footed.

I will tell you more about them next time.

I hope you can read this but if you can not get Auntie to read it to you.

Your sister and the other ladies
send lots of love for you - and I want
hug and kiss my little daughter that
on the sea shore.

F. Ayer.

abeth Alford Cassons. Their house at Dover, built in 1776, is still in use. His son John (Ellen Banning's grandfather) was graduated from Princeton in 1810, and married Elizabeth Lowber, a descendant of Peter Lowber, of Amsterdam.

William L. Banning practiced law in Philadelphia for a time, and was a member of the Pennsylvania Legislature in 1845, but in 1855 moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where he was a member of the Minnesota House of Representatives in 1861. He served for two years in the Civil War with the rank of captain.

His special achievement was the building of a railroad from St. Paul to Duluth, which was conceived as one link in a system to connect the head of navigation in the Great Lakes with the Pacific Ocean. He devoted many years of his life to this project, involving, as it did, the procurement of land grants from Congress, a trip to Europe to float the bonds (made abortive by the Franco-Prussian War), and other financing in which he was greatly aided by President Thompson of the Pennsylvania Railroad Company. The original charter was granted to the Nebraska & Lake Superior Railroad Company in 1857. In 1861 this name was changed to Lake Superior & Mississippi Railroad Company. Construction was begun in 1868 and the entire line of 156 miles was completed and formally opened in 1870, having cost slightly over $7,000,000. Mr. Banning was at that time president of the company.

In 1872 the line was leased to the Northern Pacific Railway Company. The financial embarrassment of the latter road in 1874 led to the cancellation of this lease, and the Lake Superior & Mississippi Company defaulted on its bonds in 1875 and in 1877 was sold to its bondholders under foreclosure proceedings. A reorganization was at once effected under the name St. Paul & Duluth Railroad Company. This new road was finally absorbed by the Northern Pacific Railway Company in 1900.

The first locomotive that went over a completed section of the road was christened by Ellen Banning with two glasses of water,—one from Lake Superior and one from San Pedro Harbor, Cal., sent by her uncle, Phineas Banning,—in these words:

"With the waters of the Pacific Ocean in my right hand and the waters of Lake Superior in my left, invoking the Genius of Progress to bring together with iron bands the two great commercial systems of the globe, I dedicate this engine to the use of the Lake Superior and Mississippi Railroad, and name it William L. Banning."

VIII

THE AMERICAN WOOLEN COMPANY

IN June, 1885, the Washington Mills, a large woolen corporation in Lawrence, failed, and the mills, water power, and machinery were sold at auction. I was a stockholder in the failed mills and felt that they had been slaughtered by the selling house [Harding, Colby & Company—now William Whitman Co., Inc.] with the intention of buying them at auction. I attended the sale and found the selling house to be the only bidder. Determined that they should not have the mills for nothing, I bid against them and bought the mills for $328,000. The mills were all old and several of them were nine stories high and too narrow for modern machinery. After investigation by engineers and mill experts I decided that it would not pay to put machinery in these mills, and to build new ones in their places. The machinery was sold out for about the sum I had paid for the whole plant. The mills were pulled down, and the most modern mills of that time were put in their places and stocked with the latest machinery,—partly English, partly American.

This enterprise proved larger than I wanted to shoulder myself, and the corporation of the Washington Mills Company was formed, with $1,000,000 capital. (At date of this writing, June, 1913, its capital is $60,000,000.*) A few friends took small amounts of stock and I took the balance. With this capital it was impossible to stock the mills with machinery and material to run them, and I applied to the legislature for power to increase the capital to $2,000,000. This was

*I.e., the capital of the American Woolen Company, of which it was the nucleus.

refused because of the jealousy of our legislators in regard to large capitalizations. I finally got permission to increase the capitalization by $1,000,000 preferred stock, which I took myself, my associates not believing that we could prosecute the business on that capital. After it was found a success, the legislature authorized the conversion of the preferred into common stock and additional issue of $500,000 common stock, which I took myself.

Having seen the old corporation ruined, as I believed, by the selling house, I organized the new one with the understanding that we would have no selling house but sell our goods direct to the consumer. This was a new departure in which few capitalists had confidence, hence my small list of stockholders; but the plan was successful—after which many other concerns followed suit.

The first manager of the corporation was Thomas Sampson, who . . . proved unequal to the task and was succeeded by Frank [Francis H.] Jealous.* Our contract with Sampson was for three years at $25,000 a year,—a large salary for those times. About one year of the time had expired when we determined on making a change. How to get rid of Sampson without paying him for two more years, and also how to do it without giving him an opportunity to do serious damage to the engines or other large machinery, was a question. I had told the directors of Sampson's shortcomings and my determination to get rid of him, and had a directors' meeting called a week ahead, anticipating that I might want to treat the Sampson matter, which matured in this way. Jealous, who lived in Lawrence, had been conferred with and was ready to take Sampson's place on call. When I found fault with Sampson, he had a way

*Now agent of the Rochdale Mills, Rochdale, Mass.

of offering his resignation. After arranging the directors' meeting, and with Jealous on call ready to step into Sampson's place, I had an interview with Sampson, in which he attempted to bluff me by threatening to resign, and I asked him to write his resignation, which he did and handed me. I told him I was not prepared to treat with him on the subject, but that I felt in duty bound to submit it to the directors, that they were to meet two days hence and that I wished he would meet with them and discuss the question, which he did.

At the meeting I handed in his resignation and, according to a prior understanding, a move was instantly made and seconded to accept it, and it was so voted. He remarked that this was rather sudden and said: "I suppose you would like to have me take care of the mills until you get someone to take my place," to which I said: "Mr. Sampson, that is already arranged, and as soon as this vote was passed, Mr. Jealous was telephoned to, to take charge of the mills, and I have no doubt he is there now." Sampson said: "But am I not going to be allowed to go into the mills again?" I replied: "No, all have orders not to admit you after Mr. Jealous takes possession." "But, I have my private property there—the keys of my desk, etc." To which I answered: "Mr. Jealous will deliver your personal things to you." "And I am to have no more communication with the mills?" "Certainly not." This was our *coup d'état.*

Mr. Jealous ran the mills for a short time with the assistance of Mr. Wood,* then in charge of the selling, after which Mr. Wood relieved Mr. Jealous and took entire charge of the mills as well as the selling.

* William Madison Wood, who later married Frederick Ayer's daughter, Ellen Wheaton Ayer, and is now President of the American Woolen Company.

To create a new system of disposing of such a product was attended with many difficulties. A store was hired in New York and an old merchant employed to conduct the business at that end. Several men were employed in this position before a successful one was found, but this branch of the business, as well as the manufacturing, gradually came into business shape and has proved a great success, as has been shown by being adopted by many other manufacturing concerns.* One of the difficulties to be overcome in this system of selling was the fact that no manufacturing concern had capital enough to do its business without borrowing money, and the system of borrowing was for the company or individual to give its note endorsed by the selling house, and without a selling house, where was the money to come from? In our case, I covered that gap by endorsing the notes of the Company personally, and at times I was on the Washington Mills Company's paper for as much as $6,000,000. I felt safe in doing this because the amount of accounts receivable, with what I could easily furnish from my own resources, would take care of the notes as fast as they came due.

It was understood by the selling house fraternity generally that it was my intention to adopt this system, and as it was an invasion of their system, and if successful seriously threatened their future, they appear to have

*"*Office of Frederick Ayer, Lowell, Mass., Oct. 31st, 1889*

My dear Son. [James] . . . Wish you would talk with Wood about our credit system. We can't afford to furnish all Jerusalem capital to fail on. To the failures reported yesterday add Anspach $2,514.00, and others less important and you will see — if continued — we must follow their example. J. C. Ayer Co. has not lost as much by failures in ten years. These three would pay for all the dinamo's & new twisters & machinery that Wood is crying for, and I don't dare to order.

Yr father

F. Ayer."

combined in the determination to prevent my borrowing through their influence in the banks.* This was shown when I applied to a bank for a loan during the early period of the business. I was universally met with the question: "Who is your selling house?" My answer that we sold our own goods and had no selling house brought the reply, "We only loan to manufacturing concerns with the endorsement of a selling house." When I showed them that my personal estate was many times more than the sum I was endorsing for the Company and that I also held the assets of the Company available for its debts, it was difficult for them to find reasons for not accommodating me, and one by one they yielded until, as above stated, they held my paper for around $6,000,000.

In the rush of industrial combinations, in the year 1899, Mr. Wood proposed making our Washington Mills Company a nucleus for an organization of some of the woolen industries of the country, and the American Woolen Company is the result.† In this organization I was made president, and Wood active manager. After holding the office of president for several years, in the spring of 1905 I withdrew in favor of Wood, who still holds the presidency, and I remain as director and member of the executive committee.

I cannot leave this subject without saying that Mr. Wood has managed this complicated and most difficult

* Having repeatedly been refused credit at one of the largest banks in Boston (even with his own endorsement and personal collateral), Frederick Ayer finally went to Mr. T. Jefferson Coolidge, who was one of its largest stockholders. Mr. Coolidge listened to his story, saw the justice of his claim, and told him to go back and see the president of the bank in half an hour. Just as he was reëntering the bank he caught a glimpse of Mr. Coolidge coming out, and found the president anxious to lend him all the money he wanted.

† Incorporated in New Jersey in 1899, and in Massachusetts in 1916.

business with perfect success. I say "difficult" because Major Henry Lee Higginson and other prominent business men said it was too complicated ever to succeed. Higginson was so confident in his prophecy that his company [Lee, Higginson & Company] would not handle the stock of the Woolen Company. The Company had $5,000,000 of its preferred stock in its treasury, of which Higginson knew, and after we had been running about two years he came to me and said: "Why don't you put out that $5,000,000 of preferred stock? It will save your borrowing just so much money." I said: "Because you and men like you have n't confidence to distribute it." "Oh well," he said, "I used to think the concern would never succeed, but Wood has made it a success and that settles that question."

IX

A YOUTHFUL AGE

AFTER our trip to Europe in 1884 we returned to Lowell, where we lived most happily without any special events, except the birth of our three children [Beatrice Banning, January 12, 1886; Frederick, May 7, 1888; and Mary Katharine, September 3, 1890]. In February, 1896, we took the four youngest children to Europe, where we remained until June, 1898.* We returned to Lowell, where we stayed until the fall of 1899, when we moved to Boston.

RECORD OF LATER YEARS BY HIS DAUGHTER BEATRICE

It was hard to persuade my father to write this story. We started it on the train, coming home from California in 1908, writing on telegraph blanks, paper book covers, or anything that came to hand; and from that day to the day in 1915 when it was finished he would always smilingly say, whenever I suggested a little dictation: "Quit, quit, my daughter; you are making a joke of me!" He was so modest that he thought it not worth writing. I could never get him to bring the story up to date—"You all know it; it would not be interesting." Yet his own brief words give the best picture of him that could be painted.

My first distinct recollection of my father is in Lowell, at 149 Pawtucket Street. He worked all day at the J. C. Ayer Company, and spent only an hour at home at noon; but there was always time to lead me around the driveway on his horse, straighten out some carpen-

*About a year was spent in Paris, and one winter in a *dahabiyeh* on the Nile.

Frederick Tyer
From a portrait by Benjamin Constant 1897

tering problem for Frederick, or to take Katharine on his knee and explain to her the mystery of the finding and cutting of his garnet shirt-studs.

On Sundays the big table in the long dining-room was pulled out to its full length, and there were many guests. James and Charles, home for the week-end, always sat on either side of "the Governor," both talking all the time. Many of the old friends of his story came to that table: Mr. A. P. Bonney, the Reverend Robert Court, D.D., who told wonderful fairy stories and once sent home to Scotland for a barrel of oat-cakes for us; Dr. Moses Greely Parker, the first man to photograph lightning, and Theodore M. Davis, lawyer and Egyptologist—always rather terrifying to me as the only one of all my father's friends who called him "Ayer." If, after dinner, there was some music my father was always delighted.

On the Sundays when there were no guests, we generally went to Andover to the Woods' for dinner,—some driven by Henry Smith in the surrey or double sleigh, and one passenger by my father in the buggy or cutter. We would come home after dark, sometimes with the snow piled high above our heads on both sides, and (as I thought) with the stars to guide us on the road.

Father established a Boston office in the Ames Building, where the American Woolen Company office was located, in 1897. We spent the summers of 1899–1901 at Little Boar's Head, New Hampshire. There, at the age of seventy-six, he took up four-in-hand driving—a pastime which he continued with enjoyment for several years. In 1902 we went to Catalina Island, California, where his diversions were riding, swimming, and fishing. The same pursuits occupied him the following season at Buzzards Bay, as well as sailing in all weathers with

Frederick, and driving four-in-hand. It was here he bought his favorite horse, "Newport," whom from that time on he rode practically every day until within a few weeks of his death. He took particular delight in his ability to handle "Newport," since the previous owner, who had brought him all the way from Kentucky, had been unable to do so. California attracted him again in later years, and the winter of 1914–15 was spent at Pasadena.

After living several winters in rented houses and hotels in Boston, he built the house at 395 Commonwealth Avenue, commencing it in 1900, and with characteristic thoroughness devoted much time to the planning of all details. As a result the construction and equipment of the house were practically perfect, though the architectural results were a disappointment to him. At about the same time the family began to look for a summer place near town. We found the "Farm" in Newton, and my father built a new house and greenhouses on it and gave the place to my mother. Ever since their engagement, when, in answer to the question of what gift she would like best from him, she had said "roses," he always showered her with flowers. The greenhouses at Lowell had been built for her; and George Page, our gardener, was brought down from there and installed at the Farm. One huge yellow climbing rose was considered the finest of all our plants, but my mother always wore pink roses.

The Farm was a never-failing pleasure. My father's affection for his friends and ours, combined with my mother's gift for entertaining, made our family life so happy that we seldom cared to visit; always preferring our friends to come to us if they would,—to ride, to sail, and to join in the big Thanksgiving and Christmas dinners, so full of grand surprises.

Frederick Ayer on "Newport"

In 1905 he bought the Robbins place at Prides Crossing, where a year later he built his summer home, "Avalon." The removal of the old house and the construction of the new one was accomplished during the eight winter months. He spent all his remaining summers and the winter of 1916 at "Avalon," taking the greatest interest and pleasure in its development.

In spite of the fact that he had supposedly divested himself of some of his business cares about the time he moved to Prides Crossing, he continued to go to his office daily when in Boston, and three or four times a week from Prides. It was about this time that, in association with his friend Mr. Longyear, he interested himself in the development of coal on the Island of Spitsbergen to the north of Norway. Neither of them expected that this venture would prove as slow and troublesome as it later became; nevertheless, Father took the liveliest interest in any news from the property, whether good or bad, and was as determined as Mr. Longyear to see it through.*

As illustrative of his modesty, he refused to be driven to town by motor, and permitted only a Ford truck to take him to and from the train. Nothing was too good for his family or guests, but for himself he desired only the simplest and most inconspicuous necessities. Amid the beautiful surroundings of the home he had created, his chief pleasure was found in the intimate association of his wife and children and their friends. Which of us children can fail to recall the picture of "Sir Frederick" and "Ellie" walking arm in arm through the gardens, stopping occasionally to ponder some present beauty or plan some improvement,— for my father's thoughts were always of the future.

* The history of this joint undertaking is fully set forth in Mr. Longyear's publication *America in Spitsbergen.*

His life at "Avalon" was one of wonderful vitality and activity. Frequently, during the pest of brown-tail moths, I have seen him climb to the top of a high ladder to pluck the caterpillars off the vines. We all remember the day, not many years ago, when he fell out of the top of a tree from which he was sawing the dead limbs, and was very angry because Ellen Wood tried to help him up—and another occasion, in 1916, when, on one of his early morning rows with William (whom he had taken along to oblige my mother), the boat upset, and William, instead of being the rescuer, was the rescued.

His extraordinary youthfulness of mind is indicated by a letter, written to my husband in 1917, in which he urged new means to win the Great War,—particularly the adoption and development of the tank.* His quick vision and keen judgment took in its possibilities long before it had appealed to a great many professional soldiers. These same traits are also demonstrated in the versatility with which he understood and discussed all manner of subjects, however foreign to the interests which had always crowded his life.

So to the end he was getting the full enjoyment from every passing day; and if he had any aversion to death, it was simply because of the pain it would bring to his family and the fact that it would put a period to his long life of interesting and useful achievement.

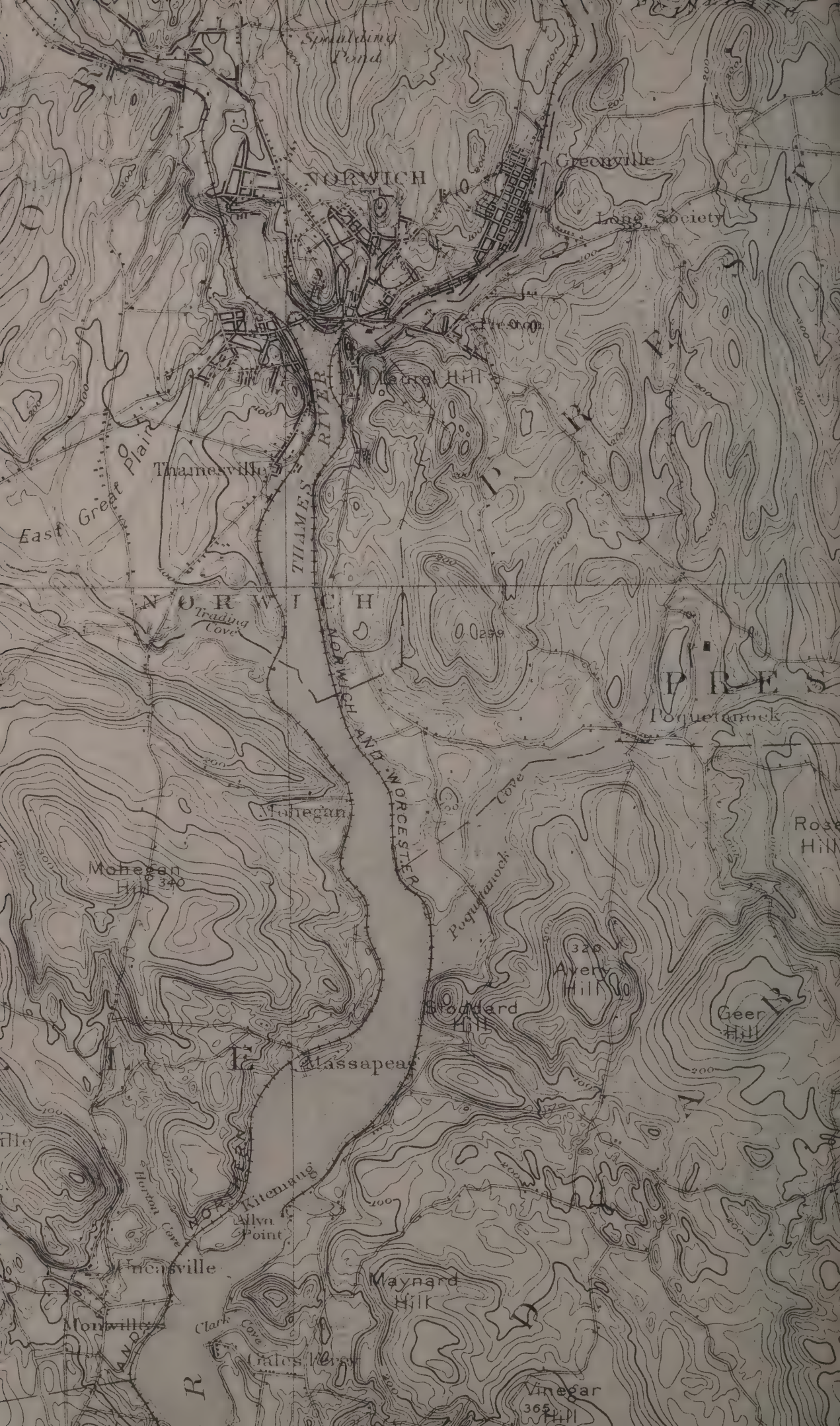
Frederick Ayer died† as he had lived—surrounded by those he loved, and planning for the future.

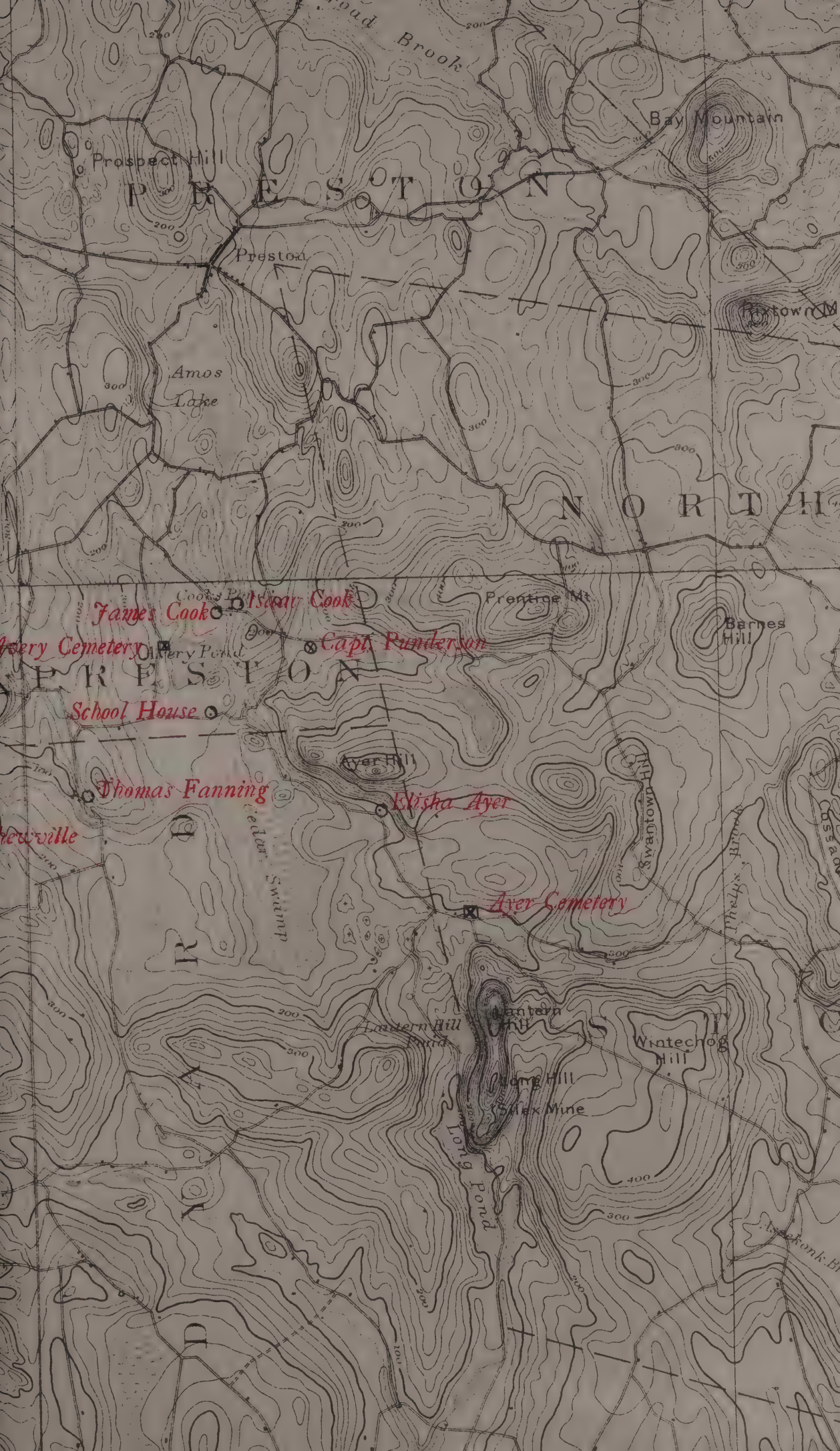
*George S. Patton, Jr., to whom the letter was written, afterwards became a colonel in the Tank Corps, was severely wounded in action near Cheppy, France, September 26, 1918, and was awarded the Distinguished Service Cross.

†At Thomasville, Ga., March 18, 1918.

"Avalon"

Map of region where Frederick Ayer was born


Spaulding Pond
NORWICH
Greenville
Long Society
Trenton
Town Hill
Thamesville
East Great Plain
THAMES RIVER
NORWICH
Trading Cove
NORWICH AND WORCESTER
Yantic
Mohegan
Mohegan Hill 340
Pequetanock
Cove
Pequetanock
320
Avery Hill
Stoddard Hill
Geer Hill
Rose Hill
Massapeag
Kitemaug
Allyn Point
Uncasville
Maynard Hill
Clark Cove
Gales Ferry
Vinegar Hill
365


Prospect Hill
PRESTON
Preston
Bay Mountain
Amos Lake
NORTH
James Cook
Isaac Cook
Capt. Punderson
School House
Thomas Fanning
Elisha Ayer
Ayer Cemetery
Ayer Hill
Swantown Hill
Cedar Swamp
Lantern Hill
Wintechog Hill
Long Hill
Silex Mine
Long Pond
Barnes Hill
Prentice Mt

APPENDIX

APPENDIX

I. Ayer Family

History of the Fanning Family, by Walter Frederic Brooks. Worcester, 1905.

History of Middlesex County, edited by D. Hamilton Hurd. Philadelphia, 1890.

(Memoir and portrait of Frederick Ayer.)

Reports of the Board of Health and of the Consulting Physicians, Lowell, Mass., 1871.

Reminiscences of James C. Ayer, by Charles Cowley, iii ed. Lowell, Mass., n.d. [1879?].

History of the Treman, Tremaine, Truman Family in America; with the related families of Mack, Dey, Board and Ayers, by Ebenezer Mack Treman and Murray E. Poole. [Ithaca, N. Y.], 1901.

N.B. A genealogy of the Ayer Family is now in course of preparation under the direction of Frederick Fanning Ayer.

II. Fanning Family

History of the Fanning Family. (See above.)

(Memoir of Thomas Fanning, great-grandfather of Frederick Ayer, etc.)

III. Cook Family

A Genealogy of Families bearing the Name of Cooke, or Cook, by James Cook. Lowell, Mass., 1882.

(The author was Frederick Ayer's uncle.)

IV. Herrick Family

Herrick Genealogy, by Gen. Jedediah Herrick, revised, etc., by Lucius C. Herrick, M.D. Columbus, Ohio, 1885.

APPENDIX

V. Wheaton Family

Reunion and History of Pompey, by Publication Committee. Pompey, N. Y., 1875.
(Memoir of Augustus Wheaton.)

Publications of Onondaga Historical Association. Syracuse, N. Y., 1910.
(Memoir of Charles Augustus Wheaton.)

Genealogy of One Line of the Converse, Wheaton, Edmands and Cooledge Families, edited by William G. Hill. Malden, Mass., 1887.

New Milford and Bridgewater, Connecticut, 1703–1882, by Samuel Orcutt. Hartford, Conn., 1882.

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VI. Birdseye Family

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(Memoir and portrait of Victory Birdseye.)

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(Memoir and portrait of Victory Birdseye.)

VII. Banning Family

Poor's Manual, 1888.
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History of Delaware, by J. Thomas Scharf. Baltimore, 1888.

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APPENDIX

Letter from M. K. Burgner, Clerk, House of Representatives, Harrisburg, Pa., June 3, 1921, to Frederick Ayer, Jr.

Letter from Solon J. Buck, Superintendent, Minnesota Historical Society, St. Paul, August 26, 1921, to Frederick Ayer, Jr.